



Towns County Herald

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TCHS Class of '23 ready to take on the world

By Brittany Holbrooks
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

The evening of Friday, May 19, heralded the closing of one door and the opening of another for the Towns County High School Class of 2023.

Graduates, along with their families, friends and educators, made their way to Frank McClure Memorial Stadium around sundown to begin the time-honored tradition of Commencement Exercises.

All 68 members of the class received their first opportunities to shine that evening during the processional, with many receiving encouraging cheers as they made their way to seats placed on the football field.

Principal Roy Perren bore no small resemblance to

the King of Rock himself when he sang the National Anthem, accompanied by senior Jaycee Wood on electric guitar. After the rocking performance, it was up to Class President Dren Green to deliver the official welcome.

"It seems like just yesterday we were freshmen, scared and confused, trying to figure out how to open up our lockers. But now we're seeing (the results of our hard work), poised and confident, ready to take on the world," Green said before congratulating his class and wishing them luck: "Go out in the world and make your mark."

As a fan of superheroes, Class Historian Layne Rouse used a quote from Batman, or rather, Bruce Wayne's butler See *TCHS Graduation, Page 8A*



The Towns County High School Class of 2023 coming together as one for the final time at graduation on Friday, May 19. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

Memorial Day Service set for Monday, May 29



A moment from the Towns County Memorial Day Service in 2012. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

By Brittany Holbrooks
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 7807 Vice Cmdr. Mel Halfon looks forward to welcoming Towns County's veterans and other patriotic members of

the community for the annual Memorial Day observance on Monday, May 29.

Folks planning to attend should meet up at Veterans Park located in front of Towns County Schools at 11 a.m. sharp, according to Halfon.

The program will include guest speakers and a ceremonial wreath-laying. American Legion Chaplain Scott Drummond will open the ceremony with a prayer service prior to a performance of the National

sharp, according to Halfon. See *Memorial Day, Page 8A*

Pro Rodeo to ride high Memorial Day Weekend

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

The Third Annual Hiawassee Pro Rodeo will ride back into town this Memorial Day Weekend, May 26-28, inside the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds.

As a reminder, spectators will be pleased to know that the uniquely American pastime will feature an upgrade – more seating at the outdoor venue.

For the past two years, the event has proven so popular that available seating has sold out every rodeo, requiring a considerable number of fans to enjoy the traditional Western affair either standing around the arena or sitting on the bank-side.

See *Pro Rodeo, Page 5A*



The Hiawassee Pro Rodeo rides back into town for three full days of America's favorite pastime May 26-28.

Photo by Lowell Nicholson/2020

TC Sheriff's Office makes three additional drug arrests

News Special
Towns County Herald

On Wednesday, May 10, at 2:09 a.m., Towns County Sheriff's Deputy Tyler Strickland initiated a traffic stop on US 75 North.

Probable cause was established, and a search of the vehicle resulted in an amount of methamphetamine being confiscated, which field-tested

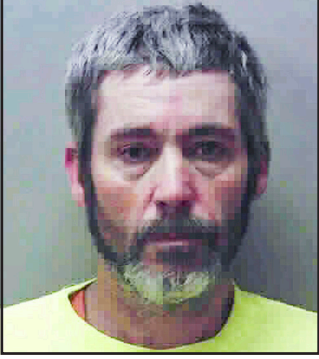
positive.

Calvin William Taylor, 45, of Roberta, Georgia, was arrested and charged with felony possession of methamphetamine; felony possession of a firearm during the commission of a crime; felony possession of a firearm by a convicted felon; possession and use of drug-related objects; and driving while license suspended/revoked.

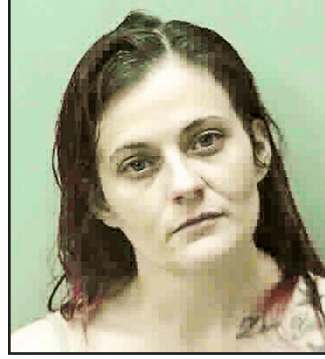
Sheriff Ken Henderson commends his patrol deputies for being effective in "our work on drug apprehension."

In a separate incident on Friday, May 13, at 5 p.m., Lt. Tommy Shook and K-9 Dakota conducted a traffic stop on Georgia 339 and Crooked Creek Connector.

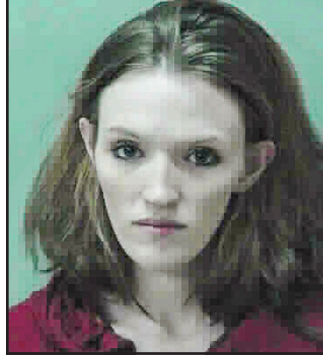
K-9 Dakota conducted a See *TCSO Drug Arrests, Page 8A*



Calvin William Taylor



Ashley Marie Reece



Jennifer Lynn Caiazzo

Ordiales gives city updates; Parker addresses conflict



Hiawassee Mayor Liz Ordiales, Police Chief Jeremy Parker and Movers & Shakers Leader William "Scotty" Scott on Friday, May 19. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

Hiawassee Mayor Liz Ordiales and Police Chief Jeremy Parker talked all things between the bridges in the Mountain Movers and Shakers' weekly breakfast meeting on Friday, May 19.

Following a brief welcome and call for prayer from Movers and Shakers Leader William "Scotty" Scott, Ordiales took to the front of the dining room inside Sundance Grill to present a lengthy list of things going on in Hiawassee.

She started with a reminder that Hiawassee has

been debt-free since February after having amassed \$4.7 million in loans that she paid off in the seven years since first being elected. The city will take on new debt soon, however, for a needed Water Treatment Plant expansion.

Hiawassee pulls over See *Hiawassee Updates, Page 7A*

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Nottely 1,776.63

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Relay Raises \$35K for Cancer Research See page 1B



The support you need for your next big dream.

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706-435-1104
HIWASSEE MAIN OFFICE
NMLS# 744611



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This is not a commitment to lend. Normal credit criteria apply.



Matt Miller
706-435-1106
HIWASSEE MAIN OFFICE
NMLS# 744609



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 locally, 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. NT(May24,Z3)CA

Pro Rodeo...from Page 1A

This year, the Southern Pro Rodeo Company is providing 500 additional bleacher seats, which Fairgrounds General Manager Hilda Thomason believes will be able to accommodate everyone who wants a seat 2023.

The award-winning Hiawassee Pro Rodeo will be packed full of action, to feature all the bronc-bucking and bull-riding spectacle fans have come to expect, plus many family-friendly activities for folks of all ages to enjoy alongside multiple popular food options.

Several highly patriotic displays will once again feature prominently in the Friday-Sunday rodeo, including country music artist Destin Bennett opening with the National Anthem.

Thomason is happy to share that the rodeo will be receiving a special award live in the arena over the weekend in recognition of the outstanding attendance that has repeatedly benefited the International Pro Rodeo Association-sanctioned event.

"You can't get much more American than the rodeo, that's for sure," Thomason said. "We want everybody to come out and have a great time. Come early; the gates open at 6 p.m. and the rodeo starts each night at 8 o'clock."

"So, come visit the vendors, get you something to eat, let the kids enjoy all the activities prior to it starting, and just have a wonderful Memorial Day Weekend on beautiful Lake Chatuge in Towns County."

Tickets are available for purchase now at <https://georgiamountainfairgrounds.com/> and in person at 1311 Music Hall Road in Hiawassee.

As always, members of the community are invited to volunteer for the rodeo and all the other events throughout the year at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds, which remains grateful for the help.

Looking ahead, people won't want to miss the Happy Together Tour featuring The Turtles, Gary Puckett & Union Gap, Little Anthony, The Classics IV, The Vogues and The

Cowsills live in concert on Saturday, June 3.

Then there's the Greater Atlanta British Motorcycle Association show on Friday, June 9, through Saturday, June 10, with Travis Tritt to perform that Saturday evening for a three-hour concert beginning at 7 p.m.

The next installment of the Acoustic Sunsets at Hamilton Gardens Summer Concert Series will run every Thursday from 6-9 p.m. between June 2 and July 27, featuring regional renowned musical acts.

July 4 will be the local favorite annual patriotic fireworks display, free to attend for area families. Thomason said that several Towns County Lions Club volunteers have gotten special certifications to be able to launch even bigger fireworks this year, so be sure to attend in 2023.

And for the first time in Hiawassee, Grammy Award-winning artist Zach Williams will deliver a soulful Contemporary Christian music show on Saturday, July 8.

For more information on these and many other exciting upcoming events, visit the Fairgrounds' website.

Iota Iota a chapter of Beta Sigma Phi celebrates Founder's Day



2022-2023 Chapter WOY and Metro Atlanta Council WOY

Iota Iota a chapter of Beta Sigma Phi celebrated Founder's Day in Atlanta with the Metro Atlanta Council. Founder's Day recognizes the founding father, Walter Ross. This year marked 92 years. During the luncheon the sisters had an opportunity to look at scrapbooks' members had collected over the years. What fun to see what chapters were like more than 50 years ago.

Iota Iota was invited to judge the Metro Atlanta Council contest for best program, best service, best social and

best ways and means. In addition, there was an overall chapter of the year and woman of the year. We spent several hours looking at the write ups before coming to the overall best in each area.

The overall chapter woman of the year was Camille Hoey from Kappa Mu and the MAC council of the year was Shirley Mensching. A woman of the year from each chapter was recognized and given a yellow rose. Our own woman of the year Robin Zimmerman was recognized

too. To offset the cost of the luncheon a 60/40 raffle was held. Iota Iota's own sister Jeanee McJiton won \$79.00. Our table decoration was won by a visiting sister who attended the luncheon as a guest, Debbie Bergard from Miami Preceptor Omicron Pi.

After the luncheon we took the opportunity to shop at Trader Joes. Kathy Ross said it was the first time she had been to a Trader Joe. Needless to say, our vehicles was packed with lots of delicious groceries. NT(May24,Z24)CA

Thomas Nault receives Blue Star Banner and SAR certificate

On May 16, Stephen Weaver, President of the Blue Ridge Mountains Chapter, Georgia Society, the Sons of the American Revolution (SAR), presented the Blue Star Banner and SAR certificate to Mr. Thomas Nault.

Nault received the banner and certificate "for the support and sacrifice in having his son Capt. Michael Tyler Nault, a C17 pilot and aircraft commander in the 16th Airlift Squadron of the 437th Airlift Wing stationed at Joint Base Charleston, South Carolina. Michael previously was a T6 Instructor Pilot and Functional Check Pilot based at Columbus AFB in Columbus, MS."

"Blue Star Banners" represent a family's loved one who is serving their country in the U.S. military, while the "Gold Star Banner" refers to the loss of a family member in military service. For example, the mother of a son/daughter who died in service is referred to as a "Gold Star Mother." The last Sunday in September is observed as Gold Star Mother's Day.

The practice actually started in 1917 as a father's way to honor his two sons serving on the front lines during World War I. Army Capt. Robert L. Queissner of the 5th Ohio Infantry designed and patented this symbol of honor. On September 24, 1917, the flag was officially acknowledged in the Congressional Record in Ohio, commemorated with these words: "The world should know of those who give so much for liberty. The dearest thing in the entire world to a father and mother - their children."

During World War II, the Department of War issued specifications on the manufacture of the banner as well as guidelines indicating when and by whom the service ban-



(L-R): Thomas Nault, Stephen Weaver and Sid Turner

ner could be flown. The Department of Defense updated the guidelines on December 1, 1967, with an Act of Congress authorizing a service banner. The image is easily recognizable as a single blue or gold star, floating on a crisp white background and surrounded by a red border. A banner may include up to five stars - one for each family member on active duty or who died while serving our nation.

If you have a loved one serving in the U.S. armed forces including the National Guard and Reserves, we would be interested in talking with you in honoring their military service. Please contact: President Stephen Weaver at (828) 360-2476 or email at

spweaver@mindspring.com, Vice President Sid Turner at (706) 745-3410 or email at skunkflats@windstream.net. Treasurer Jared Ogden at (770) 855-0007 or email atjarogden007@gmail.com, or Veteran Committee Chairman Ronald Hill Sr. at (706) 865-7087 or email at sauttee2127@outlook.com.

The Sons and Daughters of the American Revolution are lineage societies which people can join. For local SAR membership information contact Chapter President Stephen Weaver, (828) 360-2476. More information on joining either organization can be found on the SAR website at www.sar.org or DAR website at www.dar.org.

VFW Fish Fry

The VFW is pleased to have you come and have Fish Fry with us at our post on Sunny Side for \$12 or \$15 all you

can eat.

The nights of the fish fry is still the second (2nd) and the fourth (4th) Fridays of each month Remember no tax and no tip. We hope to see you there.

VFW Bingo

The VFW Post 7807 in

Hiawassee has Bingo every Sunday afternoon at 2:30 PM. Doors open at 1:30 PM.

We are located on Highway 288, Sunnyside Road, Hiawassee, Ga. Food and drinks will be available. Come join us and have fun! Starting January 16. For more info call 706-896-8387. NT(May17,A1)JH

North Georgia Technical College 2023 President's List and Honor Roll for Spring Semester

North Georgia Technical College (NGTC) recently announced students named to the President's List and Honor Roll for spring semester 2023. The President's List recognizes full-time students with a 4.0 GPA. The Honor Roll recognizes full-time students with a 3.5 GPA. Full-time students are those taking at least 12 credit hours with no developmental courses.

Towns County students named to the Honor Roll include: Caroline Cameron, Criminal Justice Technology; Christine Fox, Cosmetology; Ryan Harger, Business Management; Hannah Minchew, Institutionally Accepted; and James Smith, Practical Nursing all of Young Harris; and Garrett Murray, Criminal Justice Technology; and Todd Oakes, AS Degree in General

Studies both of Hiawassee.

Union County students named to the Honor Roll include: Patricia Cason, Medical Assisting; Jennah Collins, Cosmetology; Emily Davis, Cosmetology; Tara Hodges, Medical Assisting; Taylor Martinez, Early Childhood Care and Education; Delaney Mathews, AS Degree in General Studies; Ellie Tritt, Interdisciplinary Studies; and Alexis Whittemore, Automotive Collision Repair all of Blairsville.

Towns County students named to the President's List include: Katherine Bagley, Business Management; Colleen Crowder, Electrical Systems Technology; Victoria Figg, Shampoo Technician Certificate; Christy Garrison, Payroll Accounting Specialist Certificate; Kaylea McClure,

Cosmetology; Sandy Morgan, Business Technology; and Alexander Mullins, Networking Specialist all of Hiawassee; and Bobbie Hughes, Medical Laboratory Technology; and James Smith, Practical Nursing both of Young Harris.

Union County students named to the President's List include: Mary Atkins, Criminal Justice Technology; Hannah Carney, Medical Assisting; William Elder, Early Childhood Care and Education; Elizabeth Gavel, Interdisciplinary Studies; Julio Hermoso, Electrical Systems Technology; Miriam King, Business Management; Kayla Lingerfelt, Criminal Justice Technology; Raquel Mendoza Lopez, Criminal Justice Technology; Larry Sturges, Accounting; and Kendra Tanner, Registered Nursing all of Blairsville. NT(May24,27)CA

Young Harris College President's List

Young Harris College President Dr. Drew L. Van Horn is pleased to announce that the following students have been named to the College's President's List for the Spring 2023 semester. Students who achieve a 4.0 grade point average or better are eligible to be named to the President's List.

Michael Gernannt, Corrina Luckenbach, Madeline McHann, Aliya Murphy, and Sophia Shook of Hiawassee.

Makenzie Glass, Liam King, Alison Markham, Kimberly Petty, and Madalynn Thomas of Young Harris.

Southern New Hampshire University President's List

Dustin Nazelrod of Hiawassee has been named to Southern New Hampshire University's Winter 2023 President's List. The winter terms run from January to May. T(May24,A2)JH

University of North Georgia President's List

University of North Georgia (UNG) President Bonita C. Jacobs recognized students who achieved a 4.0 GPA during the spring 2023 semester. Students enrolled in 12 or more credit hours in bachelor's degree programs who achieved a 4.0 grade point average were named to the President's Honor Roll. Students enrolled in associate degree or dual enrollment programs who met the same level of achievement were named to the President's List. Honorees included:

Andrea Drost, Kenzlee Denton, Laura Gleaton, Sara Hobbs, and Danielle McCullough of Hiawassee, GA, on the President's Honor Roll.

Lee University Dean's List

Lee University congratulates Samantha Church of Hiawassee, GA, on earning Dean's List honors during the Spring 2023 semester.

Dean's List recognition is earned by full-time, undergraduate students with a semester grade point average between 3.7 and 4.00.

Congratulations on earning this academic achievement, Samantha! T(May24,F1)JH

Young Harris College Dean's List

Young Harris College President Dr. Drew L. Van Horn is pleased to announce that the following students have been named to the College's Dean's List for the Spring 2023 semester. Students who achieve a 3.5 grade point average or better are eligible to be named to the Dean's List.

Danielle Aurin, Madison Hickey, Alyssa Bantum, Tyler Kasten, Kolby Moss, Kelly Ryals, Merritt Turner, Alec Youngblood of Young Harris, GA

Peyton Barrett, Valerie Crowe, Mitchell Grimsley, Heather Parker, Blythe Smith, Andrew Whitfill, Cale Winkler, and Lily Winn of Hiawassee, GA. T(May24,A2)JH

Belmont University Dean's List

Dustin Anderson of Hiawassee, qualified for Belmont University's Spring 2023 Dean's List. Approximately 49 percent of Belmont's 6,552 undergraduate students were named. T(May24,A2)JH

Hiawassee Updates...from Page 1A

500 million gallons of water from Lake Chatuge each year to treat for home consumption, and the city needs to add a third filter and building to house it just to keep up with demand for the foreseeable future, with a projected cost of around \$3 million.

Moving on, Ordiales said she was thankful for State Sen. Steve Gooch upping the state's grant appropriation to about \$72,000 for sidewalk revitalization, which, with the city match of \$30,000, has helped replace sidewalks between Hiawassee Brewery and Ross Lloyd Road.

She went over the new hotel-motel tax rate that starts this month, which the city recently increased from 5% to 8% to raise additional revenues. These revenues will go toward "signage for the city, fishing piers, parks and recreation - anything that would help bring tourists here."

"And the majority of it will go to the (Lake Chatuge Chamber of Commerce)," she said, "which is the big plus here, because now they can bring more events to town."

Speaking next on the local impact of package liquor stores that have opened in town, Ordiales said two stores brought in more than \$2.4 million in revenue to the city over a one-year period, equating to about \$75,000 in additional tax money to Hiawassee.

"Those \$2.4 million were going to Hayesville, (North Carolina)," she said, noting that the original decision to put liquor stores on the ballot was purely an economic one.

She then turned to the impending construction of the Lake Chatuge Boardwalk that will connect Lloyd's Landing and Hiawassee Mayor's Park, to feature two fishing piers and total city walkability.

"That came from a \$690,000 grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission," Ordiales said. "It's about an \$800,000 project ... we put in \$110,000, and we'll have this great boardwalk."

Added Ordiales, "It's in the engineering phase now - we just awarded the contract for that. We have to wait for the lake to go down, so December/January there will be sub-pilings and stuff going on."

As for the Paris Business Center, a major enterprise by the city and Hiawassee Downtown Development Association that will help start-up businesses succeed in the city and county, Ordiales said the project was still raising money and progressing toward further construction.

The city-owned Paris Buildings will feature a 4,000-square-foot "seafood restaurant" - to be officially announced later - with a rooftop bar and dining area, plus a business incubator and two retail storefronts that will house a rotating roster of new local businesses.

Business center funding is being split between grants, donations and loans, with costs having ballooned from \$1.3 million to \$2.4 million since the start of the pandemic. The DDA will be hosting a Jimmy Buffet tribute concert fundraiser this summer, so stay tuned for more details.

Ordiales offered more than a dozen additional city updates and answered a few questions before turning things over to Hiawassee Police Chief Parker, who spent a few minutes introducing himself before

Piedmont University Dean Scholars

Piedmont University congratulates the more than 250 students who were named Dean's Scholars for the spring 2023 semester. Students who earned the Dean's Scholar designation finished the semester with a perfect 4.0 GPA.

Dean's Scholars included: Abby Mauldin of Hiawassee, GA. T(May24,A2)JH

University of North Georgia Dean's List

The deans of each of UNG's colleges announced the names of those students who made their respective lists for spring 2023.

Dean's List recognition is achieved by having at least a 3.5 grade point average, carrying 12 or more credit hours in one semester and having no grade lower than B.

Honorees included: Shayla Baker, Seth Kinsey, Lelia Barnard, Hannah Piquette, and Gabriela Patrick of Hiawassee. Ellee King and Jennifer Starling of Young Harris. T(May24,A3)JH

taking questions himself.

Of note, Parker responded "unequivocally no" to an audience member asking if there had been a resolution to the behind-the-scenes feud between the city Police Department and the Towns County Sheriff's Office.

"I have not even been able to have a conversation with the administration at the Sheriff's Office," said Parker, who inherited the long-running conflict after starting with the city Christmas Eve. "So, I'm not sure where the problem even lies.

"My goal would be to sit down and talk about (the issue) and try to find some resolve or agree to disagree, but at least have that conversation. That's what I want for the city. And I want the deputies to know that, if they are in a situation and need backup, my people are coming."

Added Parker, "I'll deal with the bureaucratic stuff later, but I'm telling you, if there's an officer on the side of the road and he's calling for help, I've told my guys, 'You better go' ... (and) I want my guys to know that if they call for help or feel unsafe, that somebody's coming."

"My goal for any public safety that I am affiliated with is that we all go home at the end of the day, because we put our lives on the line to save others, but we also need to be able to take our lives back home to our families."

He did say, however, that the Police Department and the "line staff" at the Sheriff's Office work well together.

"Something to consider here," Ordiales said, "all of us - the Police Department, the Sheriff's Office, the mayor, the city clerk - we all took an oath to protect and serve this community, and that is what we are going to do, period. That is our No. 1 priority."

Responding to another question about the city's policy on high-speed pursuits, Parker reiterated that his officers do chase suspects under certain conditions - i.e., going after violent offenders and reckless drivers - but they always exercise "due regard" for the motorist's public's safety.

In addition to Chief Parker, the Hiawassee Police Department has three full-time officers: James Murray, Bill Conway and Jose Carvajal.

The officers work one at a time in 12-hour shifts to cover the city 24 hours a day,

seven days a week, and Parker said his department is looking to hire a part-time officer to help share the workload.

Mountain Movers and Shakers meet every Friday at 8 a.m. inside Sundance Grill. This Friday's meeting will feature Water Safety Expert Paul Anderson to talk about boating safety in the runup to a busy summer lake season.

University of North Georgia President's Lists for Spring 2023

University of North Georgia (UNG) President Bonita C. Jacobs recognized students who achieved a 4.0 GPA during the spring 2023 semester. Students enrolled in 12 or more credit hours in bachelor's degree programs who achieved a 4.0 grade point average were named to the President's Honor Roll.

Students enrolled in associate degree or dual enrollment programs who met the

same level of achievement were named to the President's List.

Local honorees included: Sierra Deyton; Jessica Lara; Paxton Meyer; Lauraleigh Miller; Courtney Moose; Skylar Tipton; Maci Walls; Sarah Walker all of Blairsville, GA; and Anthony Covey; Destiny King; Jenna Young; and Evan Osterc all of Morganton, GA; and Kaitlyn Helton; Luz Pereira both of Suches, GA. NT(May24,Z13)CA

The Georgia Mountains Regional Commission's Meetings



The Georgia Mountains Regional Commission's Executive Committee will hold its regular monthly meeting on Thursday, May 25, 2023 at 5 PM, at the Dawson County Junior High School at 109 Allen Street, Dawsonville, GA

30534. The meeting is being hosted by Dawson County.

The Georgia Mountains Regional Commission's Council will hold its regular monthly meeting on Thursday, May 25, 2023 at 6 PM at the Dawson County Junior High School.

Lisa Golphin, Project Manager for Georgia Environmental Finance Authority, will be the program speaker.

RSVP by calling Gina Kessler at 770-538-2607. NT(May24,A1)JH

University of North Georgia Dean's List

The deans of each of UNG's colleges announced the names of those students who made their respective lists for spring 2023.

Dean's List recognition is achieved by having at least a 3.5 grade point average, carrying 12 or more credit hours in one semester and having no grade lower than B.

Local honorees included: Ava Hunter; Brittany Thornton; Braydin Burnett; Casey Hargus; Jenna Scott; Eli Hines; Jacob Patterson; McKinley Flowers; Crystal Holcombe; Tyler McBride; Delana Stephens; Jadon Pitts; Cora Spratlin; Jenna Gentry; Lauren Andrews all of Blairsville; Emily Hughes; Taryn Plummer; Jordyn Winkler; Ashley Sanford; Tayton Plummer all of Morganton; Logan

Disser of Suches; Ellee King; Jennifer Starling; Destiny Orellana-Irvin all of Young Harris. NT(May24,Z15)CA

Appalachian Duplicate Bridge Club News

On Monday, May 15, four and one half tables of the Appalachian Duplicate Bridge Club played a Howell movement at the Clay County Senior Center in Hayesville, NC. Ray Ferree and Jim Bell finished in first place with a score of 48.5 on a day where average scoring was 36.0 and earned 0.90 black points. They were followed by Joe and Joan Lane in second place with a score of 44.5 and earned 0.63 black points. Marcia Schultz and Mary Stoll came in third with a score of 39.5 and earned 0.56 black points. Dennis and Linda Ray were fourth with a score of 38.0 and earned 0.39 black points. Myrna Ponkauskas and Frank Fulford rounded out the day's winners in fifth place with a score of 34.5 and earned 0.28 black points.

On Thursday, May 18th, three and one half tables were in play and the Howell movement was used. Marcia Schultz and Mary Stoll finished in first place with a score of 34.5 and earned 1.05 black points. There was a tie for second/third place among Ray Ferree and Jim Bell with Linda and Dennis Ray. Both teams had a score of 25.5 and they each earned 0.64 black points.

The club plays every Monday and Thursday at the Clay County Senior Center beginning at 12:30. If you are interested in playing and need a partner or information about the games, please contact Ray Ferree at 850-384-3642 or email him at rayfer1430@gmail.com. NT(May24,Z15)CA

University of North Georgia Graduates

For the spring 2023 semester, the University of North Georgia (UNG) awarded more than 1,500 degrees and 26 certificates to graduates. About 1,200 graduates participated in the spring 2023 commencement ceremonies held May 5-6 at the Convocation Center at UNG's Dahlonega Campus.

Kenzlee Denton of Hiawassee, GA, graduated Magna Cum Laude with a Bachelor of Science in Elementary & Special Education.

Sara Hobbs of Hiawassee, GA, graduated Magna Cum Laude with a Bachelor of Science in Middle Grades Education.

Kenneth LaMore of Hiawassee, GA, graduated with a Master of Accountability in Accountancy. T(May24,F1)JH

Sheriff's Law Enforcement Academy

Towns County Sheriff's Office is continuing to accept applications for the 2023-01 Sheriff's Law Enforcement Academy which will begin June 6, 2023. Space is limited and attendance is free.

Participants must be at least 21 years old, a resident, business owner or employee, or student within Towns County. Participants must be willing to make a commitment to attend the full 10-week program which will be weekly from 10 AM to Noon.

From road patrols and K-9 demonstrations, to court services and jail operations, participants gain a better understanding of daily opera-

tions through presentations by various members of Towns County Sheriff's Office, as well as guest speakers from other partnership agencies.

If interested, you can apply in person at the Towns County Sheriff's Office located at: 4070 Highway 339, Young Harris, Georgia 30582, Monday-Friday between the hours of 8:30 AM and 4:30 PM.

Applications are also available on our website: <https://www.townscountysheriff.org/sca>. If you have questions, please contact Jill Gittens at 706-896-4444.

The deadline to apply is Wednesday, May 31, 2023. T(May24,A1)JH

TCHS Graduation...from Page 1A

Alfred in Christopher Nolan's "Batman Begins."

"Why do we fall? So we can learn to pick ourselves up," Rouse said. "There's always something to take or learn," something positive to glean from negative experiences and even bad memories.

In fact, Rouse made the speech personal by mentioning the hardships experienced by fellow classmates Jayden Taylor and Caleb Berrong during sports injuries.

"Despite all that some of you have gone through, there's still good in the midst of bad," he said. "There's still something to grab hold of, something to learn, something to grow from or in.

"Even in the negative, there's still good, even if it's still as simple as growing in patience, perseverance, work ethic or even leadership - there's still some good ... We all fall for a reason."

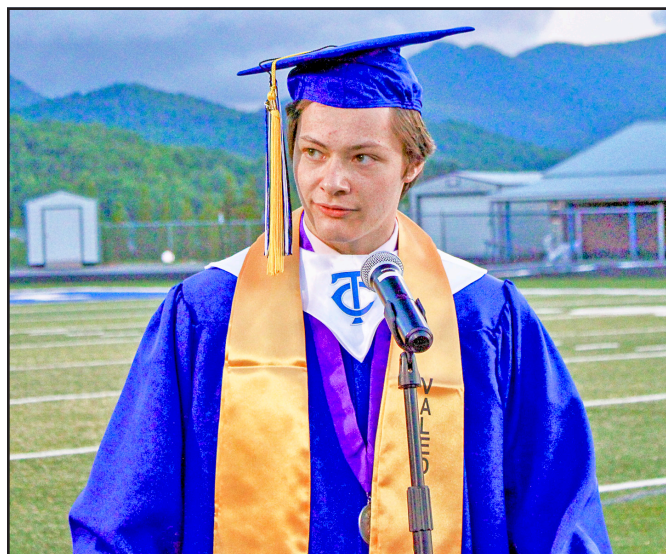
There, on the precipice of change, Salutatorian Sarah Shook reminded her fellows that "here we are - we've grown up."

After navigating the shared challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and completing the "adventure" that was high school, Shook said the Class of 2023 came out stronger for their trials.

"Our generation has been blessed with phones, because no matter how far each of us strays, we still are able to keep in contact, and I hope that we do," she said. "Beyond our love of technology, we are also a particularly determined class."

Added Shook, "Each of us has been given a book. High school and the years prior have been the stories written up until this moment. We didn't know we were making memories, we just knew we were having fun; countless memories compiled over the past 12 years are now reaching their end. It is now time to close the page on high school and open a new chapter."

Valedictorian Will McConnell thanked every teacher who had taken care of his class, not just in high school, but throughout the span of 12 long years. He also thanked admin-



TCHS Class of '23 Valedictorian Will McConnell made his family and classmates proud during his big speech Friday.

Photo by Lowell Nicholson
 istration and the Board of Education for their hand in ensuring the Class of 2023's success. McConnell also reflected on the importance of families before addressing his classmates.

"We have reminisced on our past and examined our present; we must now look to the future," he said. "As we move away from high school and into our adulthood, life will present us with new challenges as well as new adventures.

"We must not be afraid to embrace these challenges because they threaten to change us. We must instead focus on embracing the change and learning from the change."

McConnell implored his classmates to remember the values of kindness, caring and compassion, and to never stop learning.

"I want you to strive to be the best version of yourself, and I want you to learn something new every day," McConnell said. "I want you to know that I wish you the best in whatever path you choose, and I hope your lifelong journey is all that you hope for it."

Finally, as Superintendent Darren Berrong called out their names, the graduates accepted their diplomas from Perren one by one, shaking the hands of faculty before returning to their chairs.

Perren, who retired as the seniors graduated, revealed two parting gifts that the class had given him, using them to

outline his own speech.

The first, a picture of Roy Rogers with his dog Bullet and horse Trigger, had been signed by several students. Perren's second gift was a cowboy hat, a gift inspired by his love of the Old West and times gone by.

"When I watch the news today ... I don't know what to think of that, I really don't," he said. "If all I had to look forward in the future is what I see on the news and in the headlines every day, I'd be in pretty bad shape; it's kind of depressing.

"But that's not what I have. I see you all. I see your hopes and your dreams and your plans for the future, and I feel great about what lies ahead."

In short, Perren saw "the future of America" sitting before him. The biggest piece of wisdom he wanted to impart was to act with courage. Referring to a John Wayne quote, Perren advised, "When you're scared to death, we need you to saddle up anyway."

With the signal to turn their tassels, the Class of 2023 graduated, tossed their caps, and were dismissed. Out on the field, the graduates reunited with their proud families for tearful embraces and group photos with friends, siblings and parents.

Where their paths lead them next is now up to them. Congratulations, Class of 2023!



Towns County graduates celebrating with the time-honored cap-throwing tradition after receiving their diplomas on May 19. Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

Memorial Day...from Page 1A

Anthem.

Afterward, a selection of hymns will be played. Wreaths to represent the fallen will be presented from each branch of the military, and the North Georgia Honor Guard will perform the Seven Gun Salute and Taps.

"We usually try to get the school band to come down, but they're out of school, so they won't be there this year," said Halfon, but he added that music will be piped in over the sound system.

This year's keynote speaker will be VFW Chaplain Dwight Moss, a Vietnam Veteran who served in the U.S. Marine Corps for three years, from

November 1965 to November 1968, reaching the rank of sergeant.

Moss received a Purple Heart after surviving stepping on a land mine. It's a story he's relayed several times and uses as a way to teach others the importance of accepting Jesus Christ into their lives.

With his Memorial Day address, Moss hopes to stir the hearts of veterans, their families, and the rest of the community by honoring the true meaning of the occasion as a time to reflect on those who gave all.

He will also discuss active-duty service members and veterans, their ties to history and "the issues that we're deal-

ing with today."

"Memorial Day recognizes our history, where we came from," Moss said. "And when we look back and we can see where we have come from, and we can assess where we are today, (we can) see what we need to do to preserve our freedom.

"So, in remembering, we gain strength from those who have given us their life and have given us this freedom."

All veterans are encouraged to wear their Armed Forces colors, and local dignitaries like Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw, Mayor Liz Ordiales and Police Chief Jeremy Parker will be attending the service.

TCSO Drug Arrests...from Page 1A

free-air sniff and alerted on the vehicle. A search of the vehicle was conducted and an amount of methamphetamine that field-tested positive was confiscated. Ashley Marie Reece, 32,

of Young Harris, was arrested and charged with possession of methamphetamine; driving without a license; and failure to maintain lane. Sheriff Henderson said

he was pleased to see "our K-9s at work and their continued efforts on drugs."

In another separate incident on Tuesday, May 16, Sheriff's K-9 Deputy Darringer Barrett conducted a traffic stop on US 76 near The Ridges Resort. K-9 Xena was deployed on a free-air sniff and positively alerted on the vehicle.

A search of the vehicle resulted in the confiscation of an amount of methamphetamine that field-tested positive, and drug paraphernalia.

Jennifer Lynn Caiazzo, 31, of Hayesville, North Carolina, was arrested and charged with felony possession of methamphetamine, as well as possession and use of drug-related objects.

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

North Georgia Technical College recognizes Graduates

North Georgia Technical College (NGTC) recently recognized 139 students who completed their degree or diploma programs during the 2023 spring semester. Commencement ceremonies were held Wednesday, May 10, 2023, at First Baptist Church in Blairsville, and Thursday, May 11, 2023, at Level Grove Baptist Church in Cornelia.

Christy Garrison, Accounting; Jordan Hyatt, Criminal Justice Technology; Sandy Morgan, Business Technology; Rodney Nicholson, Horticulture; Camren Owenby, Welding Technology; and Sarah Parrish, Photography all of Hiwassee; and Christopher Nix, Young Harris, Early Childhood Care and Education.

Union County Graduates include: Trinity Brown, Blairsville, Early Childhood Care and Education.

Towns County Graduates include: Amanda Donnelly, Registered Nursing;