

# Towns County Herald

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## Towns Countians honor fallen heroes on Memorial Day

By Jarrett Whitener  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

A group of patriotic Towns Countians gathered at the Veterans Memorial Park on Memorial Day to honor and mourn America's fallen military heroes.

The following organizations supported the effort: Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 7807 and Auxiliary, American Legion Post 23 and Auxiliary, Sons of the American Legion, Marine Corps Legion and the North Georgia Community Foundation.

"I have done a lot of praying so we can be here," VFW Commander Mel Halfon said, referring to holding a public gathering safely amid COVID-19. "I got a couple of phone calls over the last couple of weeks asking, 'Mem, are y'all going to do a Memorial Day Service?'"

"And I said that we don't have an option. We have got to do something to honor our fallen comrades that have died while serving in the United States Armed Forces. That's why we are here today."

Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw served as keynote speaker for the May 25 event, highlighting the importance of honoring veterans and remembering those who fought in past wars to keep this country free.

"Every time we hear and watch or read the news, we are reminded that liberty is a rare commodity in this world," Bradshaw said. "That is so true, and that is a statement by President Ronald Reagan. We listen to those words, and I think about freedom: what is freedom?"

"We know what freedom is; we are living it right now," See *Memorial Day, Page 8A*



The laying of the memorial wreaths is always an important part of the annual Towns County Memorial Day Service. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

## Towns seniors parade through town for graduation celebration



Class of 2020 Graduate Stacey Mendoza-Martinez and her fellow Towns County Indians joined a parade through Hiwassee Friday in honor of their graduation. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

By Jarrett Whitener  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

Since Towns County High School seniors were unable to graduate on their originally scheduled commencement date, on Friday, May 22, the school hosted a parade through Hiwassee to commemorate the occasion.

Seniors met up at the Old Rec Gym in Hiwassee

Friday evening, where they decorated their vehicles and visited with friends and family who participated with them in the parade.

"This is just so crazy, because it ended so abruptly and definitely not how we expected it," Senior Jamison Wood said. "The school has done so much for us, like this parade, and they have rescheduled graduation and prom to the best of their

ability. "It is definitely a different ending, but it was the best option we had, and I am really thankful. Having the parade is very different and special, and it is a way to be together when you can't be together."

"It is great to have this instead of nothing. I couldn't say thank you enough for all that everyone has done for us," See *Parade, Page 8A*

## TCHS Class of 2020's Top 3 to become health care professionals

By Jarrett Whitener  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

Due to COVID-19, the Towns County High School of 2020 will have to wait until July to take part in their graduation ceremony, which should give Valedictorian Chase Reece, Salutatorian Mackenzie Wallace and Historian Sophia Shook plenty of time to work on their speeches.

The school's Top 3 students learned their final

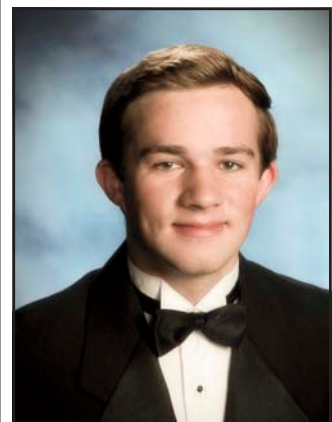
ranking last week, and they are all very much deserving of hearty congratulations throughout the community.

As a student, Reece spent much of his time with many organizations, such as the Future Business Leaders of America, the Academic Team, HOSA - Future Health Professionals and more.

"I have always known that I wanted to go into health care, so I have taken a lot of health care classes with Mrs.

(Sarah Vardo," Reece said. "Because of that, I was involved with HOSA and competed at competitions a lot, and I had the opportunity to be a chapter officer and a state officer for Georgia HOSA my sophomore and junior year."

Now that school is effectively over, with nearly two months' worth of online classes during the semester, Reece said what he'll miss the most is "the community at the" See *Class of 2020, Page 6A*



Chase Reece  
TCHS Valedictorian



Mackenzie Wallace  
TCHS Salutatorian



Sophia Shook  
TCHS Historian

## Second nursing home resident tests positive for coronavirus

By Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
Editor

Chatuge Regional Nursing Home experienced a second resident testing positive for the novel coronavirus last week, according to a May 22 report by the Department of Community Health. The status of the resident was unknown at press time.

This brings the total number of positive-tested residents to two for the Hiwassee-based assisted living facility; the first resident tested positive the week of April 24, and an employee there tested positive in April as well.

Recently, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued new guidance recommending mass testing of residents and health care professionals inside nursing homes where a positive test



Due to the pandemic, the Chatuge Regional Nursing Home is closed to visitors until further notice. Photo by Todd Forrest

turns up in either a resident or employee.

"Testing all residents and health care professionals as soon as there is a new confirmed

case in the facility will identify infected individuals quickly to allow rapid implementation of infection prevention and" See *Nursing Home, Page 6A*

## Annual Moonshine Cruiz-In to return to fairgrounds July 30



This summer, the Annual Georgia Mountain Moonshine Cruiz-In will once again rev its way into the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds, this year with special COVID-19 precautions in place. Photo by Todd Forrest

By Todd Forrest  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

As life slowly transitions to a new normal across North Georgia, the organizers of the 12th Annual Georgia Mountain Moonshine Cruiz-In are hoping that it becomes one of many summer events to provide families with an escape from the

lingering COVID-19 shadow.

On May 19, Cruiz-In Founder Rakes Parrish and Fairgrounds General Manager Hilda Thomason hosted a public meeting at the Anderson Music Hall with local business and government leaders to discuss the logistics of holding a large-scale gathering in a post-coronavirus world.

Participants and hundreds of classic cars to go with a lineup featuring live music, exhibits, vendors and two, exhibits, cruises scheduled over July 30-31 and Aug. 1

Guests can expect social distancing measures with vendors and cars spaced" See *Cruiz-In, Page 8A*

## Early voting continues; Elections Board offers precinct update



By Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
Editor

Nearly 400 people showed up to the Towns County Board of Elections & Registration Office last week to cast their ballots during the first week of early in-person voting for the General Primary, Presidential Preference Primary and Nonpartisan General Elections scheduled for June 9.

Early voting participation

has definitely been higher in the past, but it wasn't a bad turnout considering COVID-19 and the above average levels of absentee voting due to the virus.

So far, more than 3,500 absentee ballots have been issued to Towns County voters out of some 10,500 active registered voters, with 1,766 people having returned their absentee ballots to the Board Office by the end of May 22. The busiest days of

early voting last week were Monday and Tuesday, followed by Friday afternoon, during which times the Board Office experienced lines running outside the building due to social distancing measures necessary to protect against the coronavirus.

Early voting will continue over the next two weeks, running now through Friday, June 5, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the Board Office next to the Towns County Courthouse,

even during lunchtime.

This Saturday, May 30, will serve as the single weekend day of voting during the early voting period, with the Board Office accepting voters every hour between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.

Election Day voting is set for Tuesday, June 9, from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., and absentee ballots are due back to the Board Office by 7 p.m. at the latest that same day. Voters assigned to

polling places outside of the Hiwassee Precinct will want to pay special attention to major changes this year as decided in the Elections Board's May regular meeting.

Citing emergency circumstances regarding voting during the pandemic and in accordance with state law, the board has decided to change the polling places of the Macedonia and Young Harris precincts to Hiwassee for the upcoming" See *Early Voting, Page 6A*

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