

# MECHS...from Page 1A



A number of seniors receiving scholarships in the MECHS Graduation Ceremony on Thursday, May 24, in Fannin County.

Photo by Mark Smith

Walden and Skiles had the highest GPAs of all students at all 16 MECHS sites.

In her Valedictory Address, Walden thanked her parents, teachers and school staff for their help in getting her to graduation. To her fellow graduates, she said the world is out there to mold, so take hold of it and don't let it pass by.

Walden will be attending the University of North Georgia on full scholarship and is planning on a career in the nursing field.

Skiles, in her Salutatory Address, spoke about her difficult childhood, her struggle to stay focused, and her appreciation for the people who helped her get through challenging times.

"I would really like to thank each and every one of you who helped me get through my high school career," said Skiles. "I wouldn't really be standing here if it wasn't for your help."

Continued Skiles: "I

didn't have the best childhood growing up. My dad was gone because he was a truck driver, and my mom was a drug addict. It was really hard growing up like that, but it taught me so much about life and how I wanted to live my life."

Skiles said she took care of her family when her father was gone, which taught her valuable lessons in responsibility.

"I took all this on because I loved my mom and I just really wanted to help her out," said Skiles.

Sadly, in July of 2012, God called Skiles' mom home.

"I so wanted my mom to be here and to see me walk across this stage and to get my diploma," she said. "To all the upcoming new graduates, just remember that you can do it. It's not going to be easy, but as long as you tell yourself that you can do it, you will."

Skiles will be attending Dalton State University on a

Zell Miller scholarship. She plans to pursue a career in nursing.

Gilmer Site Administrator Michael Putnam summed up plans for the 2018 seniors from all three sites, saying there are 29 planning to attend college, 16 planning to enter the workforce, and nine planning to enter the U.S. Armed Forces. Four, he said, are undecided.

Three from Union County are already engaged in their next walks in life, two in military service and one working out of state.

Duncan Mauney from Union County was the high honor graduate for the Union site. De'Anna Underwood and Chrischen Knotts are both Union site graduates from Towns County.

Knotts is also engaged with the military.

In addition to HOPE Scholarships, 25 local businesses awarded an undisclosed amount in scholarships to the MECHS Class of 2018.

# Bell Mountain...from Page 1A

my children. We want it to be a fun, friendly place for families to enjoy."

Sheriff Clinton previously met with Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw to discuss a letter the county received from the Association County Commissioners of Georgia, which handles the county's liability insurance.

"Basically, they took one look at it and saw where some of these kids were painting and said, 'You've got to stop that,'" said Clinton. "We're not backing off of it, we're serious about it. It has got to stop. It's not that we want to arrest people. We want people to be safe."

Bradshaw and Clinton have posted numerous signs around the park and installed cameras with GPS tracking systems to prevent theft.

"The cameras seem to be working, and we do rely on the

help of citizens reporting anyone that is defacing government property," said Clinton. "It doesn't do any good to steal the cameras, because by the time you get home, you'll probably have a deputy pulling right up behind you. Somebody has already learned that lesson."

After a report from a resident witnessing two juveniles painting on Bell Mountain, the first arrests were made.

"We've been pretty good about putting the information out," said Sheriff Clinton. "We put signs up and cameras up. We let folks know we were not going to allow that anymore, that they would be subject to an arrest."

"Unfortunately, we had a couple of young people from out of state - they weren't from here - that ended up being the first two examples. They were juveniles, so basically how we handled that, we did take them, we did charge

them through the juvenile court, and we turned them over to their parents."

Clinton believes that the arrests have set an example for others, and that hopefully it will be a deterrent moving forward.

"It seems to take the example of an arrest for some people to realize that we're serious about stopping this," said Clinton.

The graffiti artists are slowly moving into areas of the park that are unsafe, added Sheriff Clinton, and the last thing he wants is to see someone get hurt.

"We're a family community where everyone just about knows everyone else," said Sheriff Clinton. "I would not feel very comfortable having to inform someone's family that their son or daughter had been hurt up there."

"So, if you see someone painting up there, please give a call so we can stop an accident from happening in the first place."

# Hiawassee...from Page 1A

water treatment plant, seeking development and industry opportunities that utilize city services, installing new sidewalks, wooing members of the medical industry and more.

One of the hottest things on the planning list was the installation of Wi-Fi for public use while on the Hiawassee Town Square, which has since been completed.

Unfortunately, the Georgia Department of Transportation has turned down the city's request for a turn signal at the intersection of North Main Street and Bell Creek Road, according to Ordiales.

She has also applied for a \$25,000 grant to make improvements to Lloyd's Landing Park in the city limits, saying, "That would be great if we can get some money to do that - that is an AARP grant."

Also during the work session, good old-fashioned police work paid off for the Hiawassee Police Department recently, as officers were answering a panic alarm call at a local business, according to Hiawassee Police Chief Paul Smith.

Officers cleared the call for the panic alarm and asked the business owners about the strong odor of marijuana in the area, and they were directed to an adjoining apartment.

A search warrant was obtained for the apartment, and according to Chief Smith, a rather large amount of marijuana, methamphetamine,



Hiawassee Police Chief Paul Smith

Photo by Mark Novak

guns, scales and other items were seized.

"That panic alarm led to quite a big bust there," said Chief Smith.

The chief also announced that John Carter will be the city's newest police officer, and all officers will be receiving new patches to identify them as Hiawassee Police.

Councilwoman Anne Mitchell has been reviewing the city charter that was established in 1993, and she is seeking assistance from the city council in reviewing and making changes to bring it up to date.

"It's not a bad charter, it really isn't," said Mitchell. "I have gone through it several times as late as this morning, going through it page by page.

There's not a whole bunch of things that are really wrong with it, but there's some places where I think it needs tweaking."

In an upcoming council meeting, Ordiales will be seeking approval to replace the city's 31-year-old tractor that has been continuously breaking down.

"Every time it breaks, which is often, it's like \$1,300 to \$1,400, and they almost can't find parts," said Ordiales.

The city council received a copy of next year's budget for review in the work session, and the council will hold a first reading of the budget at their next regular meeting on June 5 at Hiawassee City Hall.

# The City of Young Harris to host the North Georgia Highlands Seafood Festival

The Third annual North Georgia highlands Seafood Festival will take place on the grounds of Mayors Park in Young Harris, GA. Dates for the festival are June 1st thru the 3rd. Hours are 1 - 9 p.m. on Friday, 10 a.m. - 9 p.m. on Saturday and 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. on Sunday.

This festival has been recognized as a top 20 event by the Southeast Tourism Society. Admission is \$5 for everyone over the age of 12 years. There will be live music throughout the three days and our headliner this year will be Tommy Townsend and the waymores Outlaws. The Gold Standard Band will also be returning this year. For the full lineup go to the northgeorgia highlands-seafoodfestival.com.

The show has a number of Seafood Vendors featuring sumptuous seafood sure to please even the most discerning tastes. Lots of landlubber food will also be available at the Festival. This year's festival also features crab races free for all to partake. This year the Festival will also recognize our veterans with free admission to the festival from 1 p.m. - 5 p.m. on Friday with proper ID.

Singer Matt Rogers will be performing a musical salute singing each of the service songs. We will also have outstanding arts and crafts vendors on hand for the entire weekend



Color Guard

showing and selling their outstanding work. Antique dealers will also have some fabulous antique finds for sale. Beer and Wine Gardens will be available each day and fresh goat cheese and homemade crackers will also be available to complement them.

Come on out and spend the weekend with us enjoying the best seafood, great music, outstanding arts and crafts and antiques to be found and help us to recognize those who served our country so valiantly. For further information please contact 706-897-6179.

# Car Seats...from Page 1A

car seat and their child is with them, we are giving them a car seat as well. So far, we've had at least 10 cars show up and we've given away numerous car seats already."

Smith grew up in Hiawassee and now has a family of his own here, so he sees this as a way of paying it forward.

"It's a great way that we can give back to a community that's given so much to us," said Smith. "We're really grateful for living in such a great area, and it's nice to be able to give back like this."

Those who stopped in to have their car seats checked for outdated safety features, recalls and improper installation were given assistance in the proper way to install their seats by members of the certified child safety seat team who volunteered their time.

Wendy Gibson stopped in and received some new car seats for her children and nephew.

"We wanted to ensure that our children were buckled in properly, and when the people checked the kids' seats, some of them were no longer safe, and they replaced them for free," said Gibson. "We are thankful for this safety check and the help from everybody here."

Jackie Townley, a car safety seat technician, came out to volunteer to assist people with filling out the paperwork, and she took the time that day to share a story from a previous event.

"Some months ago, we were giving out seats on a



Wendy Gibson helping her nephew C.J. Mitchell into a new car seat provided during the child car seat safety check.

Photo by Mark Novak

Saturday to this young mother with her couple of children, one of them a small baby," said Townley. "On the following Monday, this mother was involved in a crash, and of course, the babies were in properly."

"They were in the safety seats properly, and the seats were in the vehicle properly, and both of them were fine. When the children are not hurt in a crash, that's the stories we like to hear."

Randall Townley, who works for the Atlanta Fire Department and has been involved with car seat safety since 1997, volunteered his expertise on Saturday to help others to keep their children safe.

"In Georgia, roughly 90 percent of the children's car seats are installed incorrectly," said Townley. "It's gotten more complicated now because seats used to expire after six years."

"Now, we have some that expire at six years, some at seven years and some at 10 years. What most people don't understand is, once you're involved in a crash, it renders the car seat unusable."

The seats for the Hiawassee safety event were provided through state and federal grant monies from the Governor's Office of Highway Safety, according to Townley.

All told, first responders inspected 20 seats and replaced 11 during the May 26 event.

# FBLA...from Page 1A

contestants practiced outside of school hours exclusively.

These individuals exemplify the type of student being molded within the Towns County Comprehensive School System.

McConnell and Rouse claimed the top two spots in the state of Georgia within the Keyboarding Applications category, with McConnell

taking first and Rouse taking second respectively.

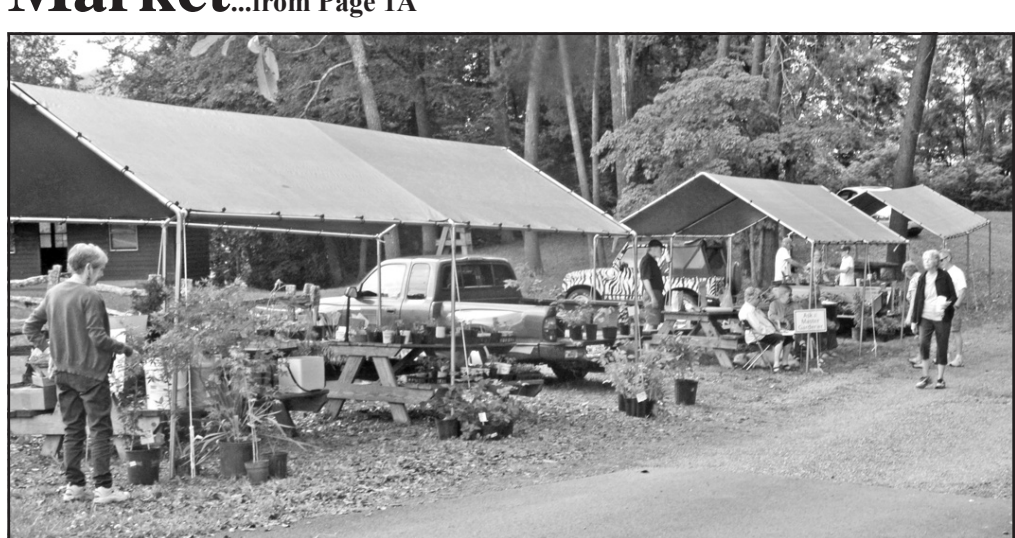
This is an amazing accomplishment for a small school such as Towns County Middle, to have students not only place in the group's initial year of competition, but to claim the top two spots in the state.

This is no surprise, however, thanks to the

example put forth by the high school chapter, led by Melissa McConnell.

TCMS FBLA would like to thank all the participants, and also thank Mrs. Erica Chastain, Middle School Principal, for the outstanding support she provides for the organization, and positive school environment she fosters.

# Market...from Page 1A



The Towns County Farmers Market is located directly across the street from the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds on US 76 outside Hiawassee.

Photo by Jarrett Whitener

a marketing system for fresh, high-quality, locally grown produce to local residents and tourists.

The market boasts a variety of fresh vegetables, fruits, nuts, honey, fresh herbs, local seasonal mushrooms, baked goods, jams, jellies, herbal soaps, lotions and other natural cosmetics, and native and hybrid bushes and plants.

The plants that are sold at the market can be used by gardeners to help them get a start on their home gardens and make it easier to help the plants grow and develop.

The product selection available at the market can change every week, and the vendors try to stock their stands with as much variety of products as possible.

Committed vendors return to the market every Saturday with fresh produce, and any new additions that have been pulled from their farms.

Another vendor, Chalin Lukas, who works with Hidden Creek Farm out of Blairsville,

set up a stand selling different flavors of goat cheese such as smoky chipotle and garlic dill.

These cheeses can take up a whole day of labor for the farmers and require specific attention to care for and produce quality cheeses that can be flavored and used in place of other cheeses.

"For those that are lactose intolerant, goat's milk lacks the protein found in cow's milk, meaning that it is safe for consumption for those people," said Lukas. "Goat's milk also contains more calcium, making it a healthy alternative for those who are in search for specific diets."

The farmers at Hidden Creek Farm try to keep their goats as happy and stress free as possible, because they believe that happier goats produce the best milk and cheese.

Also available at the market that day were fresh eggs laid within a couple days' time of the season opening, and many of the vendors offered crafts such as painted

birdhouses and wooden figures for purchase alongside their produce and other plants.

This apparent dedication of time and care by local farmers makes every Saturday different, and guarantees some of the freshest produce available to the community.

The market is located directly across from the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds off of US 76, and it opens every Saturday during the summer from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.

For those interested in bringing their own produce to the market, there is no cost to become a vendor.

Farmers are welcome to show up and set up in available positions at the market, where they can sell any of their home grown produce or handmade wares.

Vendors and local farmers encourage all community members to visit the Farmers Market this summer to shop for fresh products cared for by locals.