

Judge...from Page 1A

Judges are elected, but since Miller is resigning with two and a half years left in his term, Gov. Deal will appoint a replacement to finish out the term.

The governor will make his decision based on recommendations from the Judicial Nominating Commission, which took nominations through May 31.

Nominees received application packages with a June 14 completion deadline, and the commission will meet to interview applicants sometime after June 25.

Enotah Judicial Circuit District Attorney Jeff Langley received a nomination for the superior court vacancy, and he sent an open letter to Gov.

Deal on June 13, respectfully declining consideration for the position.

"I was honored to learn I had been nominated by one or more members of our local legal community," said Langley in the letter. "However, after careful consideration and prayer, I have decided to decline the opportunity to be considered."

"I feel I need to honor the commitment I made to voters when I asked them to re-elect me as district attorney this year, and I am on the ballot without opposition in November."

Continued Langley: "In addition, I have recruited a great staff, some of which left other positions, sold their homes and moved to North

Georgia under the assumption that I would be continuing to lead this office.

"As I look forward to my third term as DA, there are still goals to be accomplished, interesting fulfilling work to be done, and I genuinely enjoy this challenging calling. My prayers are with you as you seek to select a well-qualified judge with personal and professional integrity to serve in our community."

The Enotah Judicial Circuit serves the residents of Union, Towns, Lumpkin and White counties.

Judges Stanley Gunter and Raymond George also preside as superior court judges in the Enotah Judicial Circuit, and both men won re-election to their judgeships in the May 22 Nonpartisan General Election.

Heritage...from Page 1A

According to Extension.UGA.edu. "Extension agents have the backing of a variety of specialists who train and support programs across the state.

"These UGA faculty experts are critical to disseminating research-based information to our agents across the state. In turn, agents keep specialists apprised of the latest information and needs of their clients."

In other words, agents work locally to assist farmers, agribusinesses, homeowners and communities in a variety of agriculture-related areas.

Can't identify a bug that's infested your home or garden? Take one to Williams. Don't know what exactly killed the tree in your front yard? Give Williams a call. Need to send off a soil sample before a big planting? That's right - Williams can help.

Williams, 26, is well-versed in all things soil and crop related, as he has both a bachelor's and a master's degree in agronomy from Auburn University.

Following graduation from his master's program, he

accepted a job with Speedling Nursery in Blairsville. He worked there for about a year, until the extension job became available.

June 1 was his first day at his new position, and Williams is excited for the opportunity to help educate as many residents as possible.

"Right now, I'm trying to meet as many people as I can, just kind of network with everybody so that I can figure out what's going on and what I can do to help people the most," said Williams.

Currently, Williams is doing on-the-job training, which entails semi-regular trips to Athens and Tifton, but he welcomes people to stop in if they have a question or just want to say hello.

His Union County office hours are from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays inside the Blairsville Civic Center, located at 165 Wellborn St. The phone number there is (706) 439-6030, and he can be reached at jacob.williams@uga.edu.

He'll be in Towns County on Tuesdays from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. and on Thursdays from

8 a.m. to 5 p.m. That office is located at 67 Lakeview Circle in Hiawassee, and the phone number is (706) 896-2024.

Both locations will close for lunch between 12 p.m. to 1 p.m. on the days he is in each office.

"Come see me, I'll be happy to help," said Williams.

Once he gets settled into the job, Williams said UGA Extension will resume local classes for the Georgia Master Gardener Extension Volunteer Program, and they plan to bring a variety of relevant educational programs to the residents of Union and Towns counties.

Williams is a native of Birmingham, Alabama, and he traveled extensively in his youth thanks to his missionary parents.

"My parents being missionaries overseas, they did a lot of agriculture development as part of their mission work, so that's kind of what got me interested in agriculture and using agriculture to help people," said Williams.

Stay tuned for a new weekly column by Williams, which will appear starting next week in the pages of this newspaper.

Jarrard...from Page 1A

Jarrard is a native of Gainesville and nearby Hall County, and he graduated from West Hall High School in 2003.

He lived and worked in Athens for about 11 years following high school, during which time he earned two bachelor's degrees from The University of Georgia, one in journalism and the other in English.

When approached with the opportunity to work for Kenneth West, Jarrard never hesitated. He and his wife relocated here in 2014, and Jarrard said that, to this day, moving to Blairsville is one of the best decisions he's ever

made.

"I may not be from here, but these mountains are home," said Jarrard. "Blairsville is my mom's hometown, and now it's my kids' hometown."

"My daughter was born in Union General Hospital in 2016, and we're expecting a son in November. I've got so much invested up here - my whole life, really - and I look forward to continuing to serve these communities for years to come."

Jarrard said he is thankful for all the people of Union and Towns counties who have made him feel right at home since he came aboard at the newspapers four years ago.

"This has been such an incredible journey so far," said Jarrard. "I'm extremely grateful to everyone for accepting me and my family."

"As editor, I pledge to uphold the values long maintained by Mr. West and his newspapers. Furthermore, I am extending an open invitation to anyone to come see me about anything. If I'm not in the office, please leave me a message and I'll get back to you."

Jarrard can be reached at editor@nganews.com or newsjarrard@gmail.com.

The phone number to the North Georgia News office is (706) 745-6343, and the number to the Herald is (706) 896-4454.

Hiawassee...from Page 1A

look like," said Ordiales. "We don't want it to be Helen. We don't want it to be any city in Florida. We don't want it to be Asheville (North Carolina). We don't want it to be anything but Hiawassee."

"But we don't know what that is, so that's what this strategic plan is all about. And we're very fortunate to have these folks here."

Carl Vinson Project Manager Jessica Varsa introduced the designers from the Institute, and she went on to describe what they do and how to enhance the quality of life in the community.

"We have come together over the past few months to start to define what an implementable strategic plan might look like," said Varsa. "What's been defined and characterized upfront by Liz and the steering committee is that community input is No. 1."

The Strategic Planning Committee is hoping to create a plan that can be implemented within a timeframe of one to five years, with the goal of

bringing positive changes to the city that will increase the quality of life for all who live, work and play in the city.

"Basically, hearing from you all tonight, our goal is to gather that input and bring it forward into the planning document," said Varsa.

Those in attendance formed into small groups, and each of the groups received computers to input responses to numerous questions asked by Varsa. Everyone's responses appeared on a large screen for all to see and discuss.

Takeaways from the input session were varied, as many expressed a desire to maintain the city's heritage, while others were more concerned about bringing new businesses into the area.

Hiawassee City Councilwoman Amy Barrett is a member of the Strategic Planning Committee, and she presented some thoughts on the subject that evening.

"We want business," said Barrett. "At the same time, we want to keep it safe, and we want the at-home feel and

quality of life."

Barrett pointed out that many local business owners choose to close for church on Sundays, and though they may lose Sunday customers, she appreciates that adherence to traditional values.

"It reminds me that this is my home," said Barrett. "We're seeking an identity, and yes, we are changing, but we've got to keep the responsibility and feel, and we can't lose our traditions as well. And I think we are caught in, how do we go about that?"

Groups were also asked to share their ideas about a unified vision for the city, what their favorite things were about the city, and how they would best describe the city.

Upon reviewing the responses to these questions, Varsa and her team will design a plan and present it to the committee for review at a later date.

In addition to holding the Town Hall, Ordiales and the Strategic Planning Committee conducted individual interviews throughout the week.

"I am extremely happy with the strategic plan work last week," said Ordiales. "We had seven individual interviews, five focus groups and a very well-attended Town Hall Meeting."

"We had participation from our partners (Young Harris Mayor) Andrea Gibby, (Towns County Sole Commissioner) Cliff Bradshaw and over 60 citizens sharing their vision for Hiawassee. I believe citizen input is critical to our success."

"I am looking forward to the final product in the next few months. We are very fortunate to have received a grant and to be able to work with the Carl Vinson Institute."

Last year, the Appalachian Regional Commission awarded the City of Hiawassee a \$21,000 planning grant, which featured a \$9,000 local match for a total of \$30,000 to go toward devising this plan for the city.

BOE...from Page 1A

from the state.

Once the construction is complete, the schools will be reimbursed for a portion of the work.

In other school board news, the board approved the middle school's upcoming field trip to New York City.

The board discussed the New York trip in the June 7 work session, in which board members highlighted the success of the recent trip to Washington D.C. as one of the reasons to support the New York trip.

Fundraising is expected to begin this August for the November 2019 trip.

Board members discussed and approved the recommendation of Jacob Williams as the new agent for Towns County in the June 11 meeting.

"Williams was hired by the University of Georgia on

June 1 to fill the role of County Agriculture Natural Resources Extension Agent," said Towns County Schools Superintendent Dr. Darren Berrong.

The board also approved the 2019 Family Connection Contract.

Family Connection operates in all 159 counties in Georgia, is dedicated to improving the quality of life for children and families, and it has been serving in this capacity for more than a decade.

The board had previously discussed a System Improvement Plan, and it unanimously approved the plan on June 11.

Towns County Schools Curriculum Director Stephanie Moss made a presentation on the plan in the board's May work session, noting that the goal was to "identify our needs, select interventions, plan implementation, implement the

plan, examine the progress and start all over again."

In Dr. Berrong's superintendent report, he discussed the ongoing work to correct the flooding issues that have made the baseball field unplayable.

The superintendent is working on getting additional bids to replace the grass now that the drains have been installed.

Finding the right grass requires research on the different types that will work best for the field to give it a lush, green appearance throughout the season.

Amy Barrett, president of the local Parent-Teacher-Student Organization, attended the June 11 meeting. She presented the board with the organization's yearly financial closeout, disclosing year-to-date contributions of more than \$10,000 from the PTSO to the schools.

Barrett...from Page 1A

"It buys copy paper, Expo markers, crayons, construction paper, that block paper that the teachers in the elementary school use to decorate their doors, glue - you wouldn't believe the amount of glue and pencils the school goes through."

Added Barrett: "If you need it for school, you can basically get it through the Tools for Schools catalog."

After making a \$4,000 purchase in May through Tools for Schools, Barrett learned that the PTSO had actually gained an additional \$467 to use toward the program.

This year's Tools for Schools Program start date is Aug. 1, and Barrett encourages folks to reach out if they need

help getting signed up for the program.

She can be contacted at the Towns County Parent Teacher Student Organization Facebook page, or by email at PTSO@townscountyschools.org.

Amazon customers can also get in on the donation action, and they can do so at no cost to them, simply by using AmazonSmile and selecting to benefit the Towns County PTSO.

"AmazonSmile is a website operated by Amazon that lets customers enjoy the same wide selection of products, low prices, and convenient shopping features as on Amazon.com," according to the program. "The difference

is that when customers shop on AmazonSmile (smile.amazon.com), the AmazonSmile Foundation will donate 0.5 percent of the price of eligible purchases to the charitable organizations selected by customers."

Barrett said she enjoys donating to programs that in turn get children excited about coming to school.

"The aquaponics lab was pretty cool, and the ukelele program," said Barrett. "The reason why I like donating to stuff like that, it helps and benefits the kids."

Barrett is seeking additional volunteers to help her with the PTSO, and she is planning a July PTSO meeting, so those interested should stay tuned to the Facebook page for date and time.

Courthouse...from Page 1A

to see what could be learned about the locations in the photographs.

One man in attendance recognized his dad's old car from a photo of the former courthouse, sitting right there in the parking lot that time forgot.

And Diris Farmer recalled her days working in the old courthouse, which used to inhabit the front lawn and parking area of where the current courthouse is today.

"I worked in the office at the third window down," said Farmer, studying an old photo. "I stood in the window of the new courthouse and watched them tear (the old one) down."

The demolition of the historic 66-year-old courthouse occurred after the new courthouse was erected in 1964, and many in the room questioned why anyone would tear down such a beautiful building.

For more than a few of those gathered, the historic slideshow was like a walk down memory lane, as Edwards displayed numerous photos from around Hiawassee and Towns County.

Also in the June 11 meeting, Farmer joined Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw in unveiling a vintage Royal Typewriter once used at the old courthouse.

"This was our principal means of communication, really, documentation," said Farmer of the Royal find. "I used this little typewriter, and now, I probably couldn't push a key down. I really don't know how old it is, but we're going to do some research to find out."

"When we moved into the (new) courthouse in 1964,



An old photo of the current Towns County Courthouse.



Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw with Diris Farmer during the June 11 unveiling of the recently discovered Royal Typewriter used in the old courthouse.

Photo by Mark Novak

the state gave me an electric yucky green typewriter to replace this one."

Farmer even remembers her coworkers from way back when, though she believes she may be the last surviving employee from those days.

Folks wanting to catch a glimpse of the historical typewriter can find it in the Old Rock Jail Museum.

In other historical society news, President Sandra Green is

looking for volunteers to build the float that the society plans to enter into the 68th Annual "Hometown Pride" Georgia Mountain Fair Parade.

Green is also seeking names of veterans to include in the society's Heritage Day Celebration that will take place at 11 a.m. on Saturday, July 14, inside the Towns County Historical Building at 900 North Main St. in Hiawassee.

Coast Guard Safe Boating class draws 15 young people



The 15 young people attending the Safe Boating class at Lake Rabun were given t-shirts saying they were graduates of Rabun Safe Boating class by Michael Crowe, Rabun Co. Fire Safety Patrol.

The US Coast Guard is the one military service group whose main concern is saving people, along with safe boating, so it is always good to see young people interested in safe boating also.

It was very rewarding for USCG Auxiliary Flotilla 2-3 to see the June 9, 2018

Safe Boating class to have 15 young folks under 17 years of age attend, and with adults making a total of 22. The class was taught by Flotilla 2-3 members Douglas Townes, Paul Thomas, and Susan Ernest at the outdoor pavilion at Lake Rabun. Michael Crowe with the Rabun County Fire

FSO-PA Joan Crothers