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Bradshaw talks Bell Mountain, US 76 safety and more

By Chad Stack
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

In his June 15 regular meeting, Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw highlighted the new surveillance camera system that is to be installed at Bell Mountain County Park this summer.

After a lengthy process, Bradshaw said the county had finally received quotes for the camera system, noting that "it took a while, but it seems like with COVID people are shorthanded, people are busy." He has decided to go with a wireless system to include

three solar-powered cameras, with one camera monitoring the entrance gate and the other two cameras bugged going up to the top of Bell Mountain, Bradshaw said.

The new system will provide a live feed to the 911 Center, Bradshaw said, noting that once everything is up and running, the county will be able to instantly monitor what's going on at Bell Mountain.

Bradshaw is hopeful that the new camera system will help the county curtail after-hours activity at the park; the gates are closed at dark, but people are known to park at the

bottom and walk through to the site anyway.

Installing a camera system will also allow the county to better respond to anything else that shouldn't be going on up there, like spray painting by vandals in prohibited areas, which has been known to occur in recent years.

The cost for the new wireless camera system is \$2,481, and Bradshaw said he worked with several companies to get the best price for the best product.

There will also be a \$79 monthly maintenance

fee and cellular device fee, and the commissioner is hopeful installation will take place within the next couple months.

The park had a security camera after opening in 2016, though its use was discontinued due to issues keeping the surveillance equipment powered with batteries, as there are no powerlines going to the top.

In other news, Bradshaw spoke on a meeting he had a few years ago with Georgia Department of Transportation Commissioner Russell R. McMurry in Atlanta about

getting a center turning lane the length of US 76, from Hiawassee to the Junction.

"Any left-hand turn you make there is very, very dangerous," Bradshaw said. "If you're going east or west (and are) making a left-hand turn, you're looking in your mirror, especially during this time when you have all the traffic."

Bradshaw has had several meetings with GDOT about this issue over the years, with officials reaching out most recently a few weeks ago to have another meeting. The

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Cliff Bradshaw
Sole Commissioner

Made in GA Festival to welcome 80 vendors this weekend



Lake Chatuge Chamber of Commerce President Candace Lee is excited to be welcoming vendors and guests to this weekend's Made in Georgia Festival at Foster Park in Young Harris.

Photo by Brandon Montgomery

By Brandon Montgomery
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

YOUNG HARRIS—This Saturday, June 26, and Sunday, June 27, the Third Annual Made in Georgia Festival will be in full swing.

Admission to the festival is \$5 each day or \$7 for a

weekend pass, with kids 14 and under getting in free.

The event takes place at the Towns County Recreation and Conference Center at Foster Park in the beautiful Blue Ridge Mountain community of Young Harris and will feature approximately 80 vendors.

As in previous years,

all who attend this event can expect a very diverse and unique experience at the two-day Made in Georgia Festival, according to Lake Chatuge Chamber of Commerce President Candace Lee.

Everything from

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TCSO seizes 6 pounds of meth in 'historic' drug bust



Sheriff Ken Henderson and Chief Deputy Gene Moss pose with a deskful of evidence confiscated in the June 17 drug bust that resulted in the arrest of Alex Michael Robinson.

Photo/Submitted

News Special
Towns County Herald

Six pounds of methamphetamine, 4 pounds of marijuana, meth pills, Xanax and various other unidentified pills, three handguns and cash – that's what the Towns County Sheriff's Office seized

in a midnight raid on Thursday, June 17.

In the raid, the Sheriff's Office arrested another alleged major drug supplier and trafficker in Towns County, Alex Michael Robinson, 32, of Monroe.

He has been charged

with trafficking marijuana, trafficking in methamphetamine over 400 grams, possession of a Schedule IV controlled substance, possession of a stolen firearm, and possession of a firearm during the commission of a crime.

Sheriff Ken Henderson stated that this was the largest methamphetamine bust in Towns County history.

These drugs were

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Alex Michael Robinson

Health Department educates community on available services



Towns County Health Department Nurse Manager Lisa Burks and Office Manager Laura Ide met with District 2 Program Coordinator Janet Davis and other district representatives, and COVID-19 contact tracers at the June 18 open house.

Photo by Todd Forrest

By Todd Forrest
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

YOUNG HARRIS—The Department of Public Health District 2 and the Towns County Health Department teamed up last week to host their first post-pandemic open house event on June 18.

Positioned between a pair of National HIV awareness days, health officials utilized Friday's open house to spotlight the districtwide "Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis Program," or PrEP, by offering free HIV tests, contraceptives and other resources.

Preceding the open house on June 5 was the 40th anniversary of the first reported cases of what later became known as AIDS. Meanwhile, June 27 marks the annual National HIV Testing Day that acts to encourage people to get tested and find treatment.

"Other illnesses do not stop just because of COVID, and sometimes the fear that COVID brings prevents folks from coming in and taking care of themselves," District 2 Program Coordinator Janet Davis said. "But we're here

today to get the word out and ahead of the HIV epidemic.

"We're providing STD information, COVID information, as well as general health information, and giving away free prophylactics and at-home HIV testing."

According to Davis, Towns County is the first of 13 counties in District 2 to host the PrEP event, which coincided with the local open house advertising ongoing services.

"PrEP is a way for people who don't have HIV but who are at very high risk of getting it to prevent HIV infection by taking a pill every day," per the Georgia Department of Public Health. "PrEP is a powerful HIV prevention tool and can be combined with condoms and other prevention methods to provide even greater protection than when used alone."

Towns County Nurse Manager Lisa Burks said she would like to remind the community that the Health Department is once again fully operational, and that it's important for people to do their part in preventing sexually transmitted diseases in the

community.

"We've been handing out flyers to the students at Young Harris College," she said. "We know that if we can get to them at a young age, we can create good habits to help them live a healthier life."

"We're trying to get back into our regular services because we want the public to know that we're still here. COVID tends to make people forget that there are other services available and that we're here to provide our usual care to local residents."

For additional information regarding STDs, COVID-19 or other health-related issues, please contact the Health Department. A free at-home HIV test kit will be mailed to anyone unable to visit a testing site.

The Health Department is open Monday-Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and remains open until 7 p.m. on Tuesdays. No appointment is necessary, and walk-ins are always welcome.

"We're still here and we're still operational," Davis reiterated. "We still (provide ways) to prevent disease and help people take care of themselves."

Historical Society celebrates Flag Day and honors members

By Chad Stack
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Excited to see more people returning to their regular monthly meetings, Towns County Historical Society President Sandra Green and other members greeted guests that June 14 evening with American flags in honor of National Flag Day.

"I have discovered what the history of Flag Day is," Green said. "In 1916, President Woodrow Wilson issued a presidential proclamation establishing a National Flag Day on June the 14th to honor the American flag."

"This continued all through the years and was

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Delmer Chilton addressed misconceptions surrounding Appalachian churches in his "Myths & Realities of Mountain Religion" presentation during last week's Historical Society meeting.

Photo by Chad Stack

Peter Hohmann gets three years in jail on rape guilty plea

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

A former Hiawassee resident turned himself in to the Towns County Jail earlier this month after pleading guilty to rape, according to the Towns County Sheriff's Office.

Peter Paul Hohmann, 32, of Hayesville, North Carolina, was sentenced on May 27 to 20 years for his crime. He will have to serve three years behind bars, 17 years on probation, and register as a sex offender upon release from confinement, according to court documents.

Hohmann surrendered to the jail on June 4 and was awaiting transfer to a state prison at press time.

Enotah Judicial Circuit District Attorney Jeff Langley's office negotiated the plea, noting that "the victim of the case was fully in agreement on the plea offer that was made

and accepted by the court."

"The victim was present in court during the entry as a guilty plea," Langley said, "and did have an opportunity to speak to the judge and did so, in which she expressed how much this assault on her made her stop trusting people she knew."

"On the other hand, she was supportive and in agreement with the plea offer being made rather than the case going through a jury trial."

The rape occurred in Towns County on June 23, 2019, at Hohmann's then-residence in Hawks Harbor Condominiums.

According to an official incident report, he encountered the woman at a birthday party held at the residence of a mutual friend, after which the two decided to return to his place to watch a movie.

Following the movie,



Peter Paul Hohmann

mutual physical contact was initiated but escalated into unwanted sexual intercourse perpetrated by Hohmann, per the report.

The victim told Hohmann multiple times that she "did not

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Historical Society ...from Page 1A

always celebrated, but it didn't become official until it was signed into law by President Harry Truman in 1949."

Following Green's short history lesson, she led the Pledge of Allegiance before speaking about the recent passing of longtime Historical Society members Dorothy Handy and Steve Howell.

Handy was a sweet and interesting lady who did a lot of volunteer work for the food pantry and other organizations, Green said. Handy had even led a presentation in a past Historical Society meeting called "Grandma's Apron Strings," which Green said she wished she'd seen.

Howell was the beloved husband of former Mountain Regional Library Director Donna Howell and a longtime member of the historical society, Green said.

The guest speaker for the evening was Delmer Chilton, who spoke about the "Myths & Realities of Mountain Religion."

Chilton grew up in Mount Airy, North Carolina, and received his education from the University of North Carolina, Duke Divinity School, and the Graduate Theological Foundation.

He later went on to receive his Lutheran training at the Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary in Columbia, South Carolina, in 1977, and he currently serves as the interim pastor at Hayesville Presbyterian Church in North Carolina.

As a child of Appalachia and having been educated in religion and an active Lutheran pastor for almost 40 years, Chilton said he has become very familiar with the history and present reality of religion in Appalachia.

One myth he touched on was from an outsider's view of all Appalachian churches housing snake handlers and speaking in tongues. There are churches all over the South that handle snakes, but the number of churches that do is very small and they are probably hard to find, Chilton said.

There are churches all over the world that speak in tongues, he added, but outsiders with no real experience with Appalachia seem to associate speaking in tongues specifically with practices related to Southern religion, Chilton said.

He also spoke on myths regarding anti-education and anti-intellectualism in the South, noting that many of these myths about religion in the South spring from Appalachia historically being an impoverished area where education was harder to come by, Chilton said.

Another speaker in the meeting, Steve Eller, talked about the upcoming Eller Family Association Conference, which begins on Wednesday, July 14, and goes through Sunday, July 18, at the Hinton Center in Hayesville.

Historical Society Vice President Jerry Taylor will be presenting a program at the Eller gathering about the Towns County Historical Society itself, on Saturday, July 17. For more information, contact Steve at 706-318-7826.

Also during the meeting, Green asked for members and guests to start thinking about ideas for the monthly newsletter now that regular meetings had returned starting last month after the COVID hiatus.

With so many people enjoying the newsletters, Green said they are always looking for people willing to write articles

or even suggest interesting topics for someone else to write about.

In other business, the Historical Society is putting together a postcard featuring Marty Hayden's donated painting called "Vanishing Heritage with Fear of the Future," a 60-by-48-inch acrylic on board painting highlighting the complicated history surrounding the manmade Lake Chatuge.

The painting is on display inside Historical Society Headquarters at the Old Rec Gym, so for anyone looking to view it, Green said they would have to attend a meeting. Putting the artwork on a postcard will also enable greater exposure for the artwork and Historical Society.

"It's just a fascinating painting," Green said. "And the more you see it, the more things you see in the details."

The Old Rock Jail is now open to the public, and Green said that there are several new exhibits that the Historical Society has been working on there. The Old Rock Jail is open for tours on Fridays and Saturdays from noon to 4 p.m.

To avoid conflicts with other community events during this busy time of year, there will be no July regular meeting. The Historical Society will meet next on Monday, Aug. 9, at 6 p.m. inside the Old Rec Gym, with the upcoming program being "Prominent Women of Towns County."

September's meeting will feature a program on renewed interest for the Unicoi Turnpike, and for October's meeting, Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw will share some pictures and other items from World War I that were recently donated to the county.

County Meeting ...from Page 1A

commissioner invited Sheriff Ken Henderson to attend, as he is responsible for enforcing traffic safety in the county.

During their meeting, GDOT made some suggestions other than a center turning lane that were more of a quick fix, of which neither Bradshaw nor Henderson approved, the commissioner said.

The state will be working on drawing up some solutions, and though GDOT officials said they could not do a continuous turning lane along that stretch, they did commit to looking at installing turn lanes in areas they deem most critical.

"We want it done, and done right," said Bradshaw, who is expecting to hear from GDOT soon. "As soon as we get plans from them, and we know exactly when they're going to start and what they're going to do, we will definitely report it to the citizens as soon as we know."

Also in the meeting, Bradshaw reported that the county had hired a company to resurface the courts at the Towns County Pickleball Complex. The cost to resurface the pickleball courts is \$18,000 and should be completed within the next week or two, he said.

"The court is starting to crack, and water gets in there and separates when it freezes, and it needs to be redone," Bradshaw said.

Next, Bradshaw updated the public about the needed resurfacing of the road that leads to Towns County's remote Tate City.

The county has rented a bulldozer to regrade the road, which is about 6 miles long. He'll be saving money by utilizing county Road Department employees who will regrade and gravel the road, improving it for public

safety.

In other business, Bradshaw is scheduled to meet with the county attorney soon to discuss the spending requirements for the American Rescue Plan Act monies totaling \$1,169,023 that the county received in May.

A second and final installment of \$1,169,023 is expected to be deposited "one year later" to bring total funding to \$2,338,046.

"We want to make sure that we're very clear on how the money is to be used," Bradshaw said.

With county employees working year-round regardless of COVID-19, Bradshaw said he hopes to be able to use part of the money for compensation there.

"Our county employees worked all through the pandemic," Bradshaw said. "We didn't have people quit, we didn't have people leave - they showed up, they went to work."

"I am very proud of all public safety, all county employees for sticking with us, doing their jobs, not whining and crying, doing the extra work that they needed to do."

Bradshaw also shared a letter complimenting the Towns County Fire Department that was sent to his office from a Young Harris couple, who were the victims of a fire that destroyed their home seven years ago.

The letter praised the Fire Department for its heroic efforts to save the couple's beloved home, Bradshaw said, expressing gratitude for local firefighters and speaking to the Fire Department's exceptional service in the community.

Alongside the letter, the residents donated \$1,000 to the Fire Department, and Fire Chief

Harold Copeland, who was in attendance that Tuesday night, received a special 'thank you' from Bradshaw for everything he and his department do for Towns County.

Bradshaw also spoke about the upcoming update to the Towns County Joint Comprehensive Plan, which is a state-required document that helps shape and coordinate local work programs for the community with assistance from the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission.

"As part of this process there will be multiple opportunities for public input, beginning with a hearing ... (that) will walk through the basics of the document, the planning process, and how the comprehensive plan is used to help guide policies and programs for Towns County, the City of Hiwassee, and the City of Young Harris," according to a GMRC press release.

The first public hearing will be on Tuesday, June 29, at 7 p.m. at the Foster Park Rec Center in Young Harris.

Also in the June county meeting, Bradshaw reappointed Joint Economic Development Director Denise McKay as the county's private sector representative on the GMRC Council. Bradshaw and Young Harris Mayor Andrea Gibby represent Towns on the council as well.

"(Denise) is the county's and cities' economic development person, and she does a great job with the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission, which helps the county in a lot of ways," Bradshaw said.

The next regular county meeting will be held on Tuesday, July 13, inside the Towns County Courthouse at 5:30 p.m.

July calendar changes for Hamilton Gardens' events

Please note that because of the July 4th holiday, dates for some scheduled events at Hamilton Gardens at Lake Chatuge will be different this month.

Volunteer Orientation will be on Friday, July 9, 2021 at 9 a.m. at the Paris Pavilion. Please make a reservation by calling 706-970-0011. Volunteer workday will be from 9 a.m. until ?

Hopefully, you can stay for the Let's Get Growing Summer Series that will be the same date at 11 a.m. in the Pavilion. Jacob Williams, Agriculture and Natural Resource Extension Agent for Towns/Union counties, will be speaking on Blueberries.

The next Volunteer Workday will be Friday, July 23 at 9 a.m. with the Let's Get Growing Summer Series at 11 a.m. at the Paris Pavilion. Carolyn Cline-Griffiths, Certified Herbalist, will be speaking on Medicinal Herbs.

Be sure to mark your calendar for the Thursday, June 24th Moonlight Concert with Tom Edwards at 6:30 p.m. Then the July Moonlight Concert will be on Thursday, July 29th, (always the last Thursday in each month) at 6:30 p.m. Relaxing music by Bill Vespasian, so bring your chair and drink and snacks and enjoy.

The sponsors for these free concerts are: Alexander's; Asiano's; Baker Chiropractic; Bill and Cyndi Daves - ReMax Town and Country; Lawns to Limbs Tree Service; Moore Insurance; ServePro UTFG; Silvertown Mortgage - Lori Beardlee, Jennifer Johnson; Sundance Grill; United Community Bank.

To reach the Gardens turn into the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds entrance from Hwy. 76, take your first right after the arch and go to the top level of the parking tiers. For more details visit www.hamiltongardens.org.



tongardens.org.

In case of inclement weather follow us on Facebook or call after 2 p.m. at 706-970-0011 to see if the concert has been cancelled. NTUJun23.F4JSH

Local Al-Anon meetings

For friends and families who are troubled by someone's drinking, please call 1-828-837-4440 or 1-888-425-2666 for local meetings. NTUJun23.Z1JCA

Civic Association meets for first time in over a year

By Chad Stack
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

For the first time in over a year following the COVID-19 pandemic, the Towns County Civic Association held a public meeting on Thursday, June 17, in the Conference Center at Foster Park.

Civic Association President Michael Courey, Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw, and Judy Potter of the local Firewise Coalition started the meeting by recognizing Chestatee-Chattahoochee RC&D Council Executive Director Frank Riley for having earned the 2021 Silver Smokey Bear Award, a national award from the U.S. Forest Service that is the highest honor an individual can receive for outstanding multi-state wildfire prevention service.

In his RC&D capacity, Riley works with the Forest Service, Firewise and other fire prevention programs all over the Southern United States, and Courey said he and Bradshaw wanted to make sure to acknowledge Riley for his years of hard work and outstanding wildfire prevention services in Towns County.

Next, Courey recognized all veterans, city and county elected officials, and all guests associated with the education system, encouraging everyone to attend the public meetings for the county, cities, and school board.

Each table in the conference room contained information about the

Civic Association, Health Department, and a schedule of all the upcoming public meetings in the county and for both Young Harris and Hiwassee.

The first guest speaker of the meeting was Laura Ide, who is the Office Manager at the Towns County Health Department. Ide spoke about several of the programs available via Public Health and how the Health Department works with other organizations in the community, like the jail, school district, home health, nursing agencies and other organizations.

During her presentation, Ide updated guests Thursday night with preliminary census data and how the Health Department uses that.

"I thought it was interesting that, of all the counties immediately surrounding us, Towns County has the biggest, largest percentage of growth, coming in at 14.9% growth," Ide said. "Now, that is alarming when you consider that, nationally, the whole U.S. saw a growth of 6.3%. So, 14.9% shows that a lot of people are seeing the beauty of this county and wanting to move here."

The largest percentage of growth was in the category of people aged 65 and older, Ide said, before going on to explain the importance of staying in touch with information contained in sources like census data to assist the Health Department in fine tuning its services to meet the needs of the county.

She also spoke about

some of the most utilized services at the Health Department, including immunizations, family planning and cancer-related services for women.

"Our mission is to promote health and wellbeing," Ide said, "to prevent disease, injury and disability, and to prepare for and respond to disasters."

Also during the meeting, Commissioner Bradshaw presented the new county Transfer Station plans update. Transfer Station Director Steven Youngblood attended the meeting, and Bradshaw thanked him for all of his hard work and for helping to craft the new plans to update the station.

Currently, residential and commercial garbage is dumped in the same area of the station, though Bradshaw said they will be separating commercial from residential garbage. Where garbage is dumped now will be the commercial area once construction is complete.

One of the main reasons for creating the new plans is to make things easier and quicker for the residents of Towns County who take their trash to the Transfer Station, Bradshaw said.

Another reason is that, with the current system, residents must exit their vehicles, walk on the concrete, throw their garbage in the hole, and then get back in their vehicles, which makes the bottoms of people's shoes dirty and ends up getting tracked into vehicles.

Ultimately, the plans were designed to make the Transfer Station a neater, cleaner and quicker experience for citizens of Towns County, Bradshaw said. The cost to implement the plans will be between \$100,000 to \$120,000 and should be completed at the end of 2022.

Dr. Samuel Le Church was another guest speaker that evening, and he talked a bit about COVID-19 and the vaccines. Dr. Church and his office at Synergy Health of Hiwassee held multiple vaccination clinics earlier this year, working in concert with the county at the Foster Park Rec Center and a tireless team of local volunteers.

Towns County High School Principal Roy Perren also spoke in the meeting, talking about the programs



In the meeting, Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw and Judy Potter offered words of kindness and recognition for Frank Riley for winning the 2021 Silver Smokey Bear Award.

offered at the school to educate students about the dangers of drugs and drug abuse.

One such program is Red Ribbon Week, which focuses on drug awareness using age-appropriate activities from the High School all the way down to the Elementary School. Another program offered at the school is the S.A.D.D. Club, which stands for Students Against Destructive Decisions.

The S.A.D.D. Club is funded through the state, which allows the school to

bring guest speakers in, and so far, Perren said they have been able to bring in some great guest speakers who have had a very profound impact on the students.

Looking to better educate the children of Towns County and provide them with the knowledge and ability to make the right decisions, Perren and Courey have teamed up to create a project to have students speak at the next Civic Association meeting.

"So, what we're hoping to do community wise is to

be able to get some students to come to one of these meetings and present, from their perspective, what they see in the community," Courey said.

This fits with the purview of the Civic Association, which generally aims to engage residents of the county with their community, including encouragement to attend local governmental meetings to better understand how tax dollars are being spent and what initiatives are ongoing by elected officials.

Photo by Chad Stack



Dr. Samuel Le Church spoke on COVID-19 vaccines in the June 17 Civic Association meeting. Dr. Church, his staff, volunteers and the county worked to hold numerous Moderna clinics as the county rolled vaccines out earlier this year.

Photo by Chad Stack

Drug Bust...from Page 1A

targeted for specific locations in Towns County to be cut into smaller amounts and delivered to specific drug dealers in Towns County, the Sheriff said, noting that this will impact the supply chains of drugs coming into Towns County and being sold to the community and youth.

According to Sheriff Henderson, the arrest was the result of a four-month investigation that intensified into a three-day, around the clock investigation.

A team made up of

the Sheriff, Towns County Sheriff's Office Drug Agents and Deputies converged on the heavily armed suspect and arrested him without incident around midnight on Thursday.

The same investigative unit took part in a joint bust June 6 with Georgia State Patrol that got about a pound of meth off the streets, bringing the total amount of meth confiscated from people charged with trafficking to 7 pounds in June alone.

Seizing the 7 pounds of methamphetamine and

other drugs designated for the Towns County community is significant, and Sheriff Henderson cannot give enough praise for the Sheriff's Drug Investigative Unit and Deputies who put in so many long hours on these investigations.

"In the short five months since taking office, our commitment and multiple arrests have impacted drug dealers and supply to our community," Henderson said, commending his deputies for a "job well done!"

Robinson has been charged only and is presumed innocent until found guilty in a court of law.

Correction:

Towns County Coroner Tamela Cooper contacted the Towns County Herald following publication of a June 9 article in which she referred to The Sand Bar and Grille as just "the bar."

It was brought to her attention that she should have referred to the restaurant by its full name, reflecting the requirement that establishments serving alcohol in Towns County derive at least 50

percent of proceeds from food sales.

She reiterated that the purpose of her remarks was to bring awareness to how dangerous it is to cross US 76 on foot in that area.

Made in GA...from Page 1A

cattle ranchers offering beef products and local beekeepers with honey, to mushrooms, woodworking crafts, jewelry, chocolate, and even Towns County students with robots will be present at the festival.

Georgia Mountain Falconry, always a popular attraction, will return once again this year to feature their birds of prey.

As far as classes go, even more are being made available than ever before, including cooking classes by Georgia Grown as well as the Georgia Dairy Association's Mobile Dairy Classroom, complete with a cow on site to show children where that delicious milk comes from.

An award-winning master beekeeper will also be teaching Beekeeping 101 on Saturday with honey tasting to follow.

While on the topic of edible items, Lee stated that Thousand Hills Cattle Ranch will be among several new vendors this year, offering beef jerky and sausage.

Guests can also expect pecans, peppers and cheese straws as well as other delicious treats to take back home and of course snack on while exploring all the festival has to offer.

Although Made in Georgia is only in its third

year, it has already attracted an enthusiastic following, with many repeat visitors from year to year hoping to grab up the unique crafts and foods that are otherwise hard to come by or even non-existent in the area.

And the numbers have proven this festival's popularity, Lee said, pointing out that first-year attendance was 3,500, with second-year growth bringing in more than 4,500 people for the following festival.

Though the total number of vendors in 2021 has been reduced slightly from previous years due to social distancing concerns, the family-friendly event will still offer patrons plenty of activities, demonstrations, and classes for all age groups, including kids.

All who attend this festival can rest assured that their purchases will be going to good use in helping to support numerous small business owners and hobbyists who have taken a recent blow due to COVID-19.

Unfortunately, some vendors who attended the last two Made in Georgia Festivals have had to abandon their passions and seek other occupations as a result of the pandemic, and last year, though many attempts were made to safely hold the festival, it just wasn't feasible.

That's why, according to Lee, this is a great time for the community to show up and support the local economy and the many vendors who have traveled hours from the South Georgia area to show off their work.

Longtime volunteer Dian Woodruff is actually responsible for coming up with the idea for the local festival, Lee said, with the chamber organizing the annual event along with the help of several staff members and especially all of the extremely helpful volunteers.

All in all, it takes an average of about nine months to gather vendors and prepare everything that is essential to making the event come together, and Lee said she was grateful for everyone involved.

In addition to the many volunteers, Recreation Director Matthew Youngblood, 911 Director Marty Roberts and Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw have been very helpful in providing the Rec Center and making the festival a reality, she said.

Another point to highlight is the fact that the festival, unlike many others, is held indoors and parking is plentiful, so rain or shine, the festival will be sure to thrive this weekend.

Hohmann...from Page 1A

want to have sex," though Hohmann "continued with what he was doing acting as if he did not hear her," per the report.

After the rape, the victim dressed and excused herself to leave before reaching out to a friend, who both comforted her and counseled her to report the incident to law enforcement, which she did the next day, per the report.

Towns County Investigator Langdon Beard initiated a rape investigation on June 24, 2019, recounting in an incident report that the victim had shown him a text message from Hohmann stating, "I thought you was into it and didn't really mean the 'no'

part."

Beard applied for and secured a search warrant to obtain evidence from Hohmann's residence, which he executed later that same day.

"We made contact with Peter, gave him a copy of the search warrant, and we entered the residence," Inv. Beard wrote. "Peter stated that he did not understand why we were there, because 'she wanted it,' referring to (the victim)."

He was arrested two days after the rape on June 25, 2019, and a grand jury indicted him for the offense on July 8, 2019. He remained in custody for about 10 months before receiving a bond on April 23, 2020, at which time he was

released on a \$75,000 property bond.

Hohmann was living in Towns County at the time of his arrest, though he was residing in Hayesville when he turned himself in to begin his sentence this month.

According to the Georgia Department of Corrections, Hohmann's maximum possible release date is Aug. 5, 2023, as he will be receiving credit for the roughly 10 months he served in county lockup prior to making bond.

His "Actual Release Date" could occur prior to his maximum release date due to the possibility of "the offender receiving clemency by the State Board of Pardons and Paroles."