

# Towns County Herald

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## Towns to wish America 'Happy Birthday' July 4

By Brittany Holbrooks  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

Towns County isn't skipping out on Fourth of July celebrations in 2023, with the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds primed to make this year bigger and better than any before with new attractions, greater community involvement and more potent fireworks.

"We're doing a much bigger fireworks show this year," Fairgrounds General Manager Hilda Thomason said of the upcoming Tuesday, July 4, free-to-attend event. "We did a \$5,000 show the last several years - we're doing a \$10,000 show this year."

"We sent some of the Lions Club members to school and trained them, got them cer-

tified, and they're shooting the larger shells this year, so they'll be going much higher."

Calvary Baptist Church will help set up bouncy houses and an inflatable slide, and there'll be plenty of other activities for the little ones to check out, like a football toss game, and homemade cinnamon rolls will be up for sale to help fund a mission trip for the youth.

The Fairgrounds' very own security guards will be setting up games of cornhole, and Thomason said it's not going to be for any sort of competition, so anyone who wants to just come out and have fun should feel welcome to do so.

There will also be live music courtesy of the band Vintage Vixens, a well-known favorite locally that will be

coming up from Atlanta to rock out with some groovy tunes straight from the '60s and '70s. They'll be playing from 6-9 p.m.

Be sure to come hungry, too. As in festivals past, the bonfires are making a return along with s'mores, and there will be plenty of food vendors to choose from if anyone in the family wishes to augment their sweet tooth.

Notably, hot dogs, barbecue, watermelon, ice cream and snow cones will be available, among other options.

"Anything you want to eat, we've got it," Thomason said.

Down at the Fairgrounds ballfields, the Towns County Recreation Department will be *See Happy Birthday USA, Page 8A*



The annual Fourth of July Fireworks at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds are always a treat for families, giving them a terrific way to celebrate America together as Americans.

Photo by Lowell Nicholson/2020

## 'Family Fun Day' a huge success for first responders



Jeff Pierot and Wayne Fiorito of Summer Heat of Towns County honored leaders of local first responder agencies in the June 17 Family Fun Day.

Photo by Lowell Nicholson

By Natalie Mintz  
Towns County Herald

On Saturday, June 17, families and first responders gathered at the Towns County Recreation and Conference Center for games and activities in the First Annual Family Fun Day hosted by the non-profit Summer Heat of Towns County.

The event succeeded in raising money for its cause with help from the community, bringing Summer Heat's fundraising total to about \$15,000 so far, with a goal of providing financial support for local first responders who get hurt or sick on or off the job.

Family Fun Day had activities that appealed to all ages, including face painting, ax throwing, ring-toss and a dunk tank. Attendees also

purchased merchandise from participating local businesses, and local restaurants provided food. All of this was back-dropped by live music.

Led by resident Wayne Fiorito, Summer Heat began a little over a year ago as a way to raise money for the Towns *See Family Fun Day, Page 8A*



Fire Chief Harold Copeland dealing during a friendly "Guns N' Hoses" kickball match between the Fire Department and Sheriff's Office on Family Fun Day June 17.

Photo by Lowell Nicholson

## Federal fugitive threatens, punches deputy during arrest

News Special  
Towns County Herald

In late April 2023, residents of Tate City expressed concerns to Towns County Sheriff's Deputy Tony Petty about a dangerous convicted sex offender living at 1057 Rhododendron Circle.

Edward Compton Treisback, 63, had been released from federal custody after serving his sentence for one count of Receipt of Child Pornography and two counts of Possession of Child Pornography, and he was a fugitive from justice hiding out in Tate City.

A federal probation officer supplied the Sheriff's Office with a copy of an arrest warrant for Treisback for probation violation.

After attempts to make contact with Treisback, on May

22, the Sheriff's Office set up surveillance on the residence to ensure Treisback was inside.

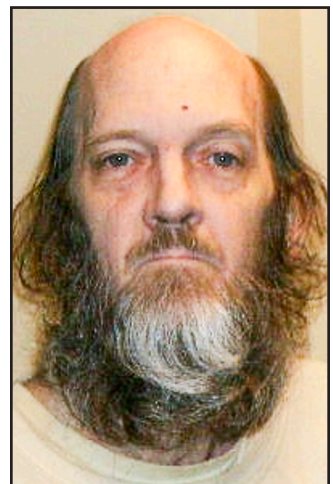
Deputies along with Sheriff Ken Henderson and Chief Deputy Gene Moss executed the arrest warrant.

At that time, Treisback verbally threatened to kill a deputy and proceeded with an attempt to assault the deputy with a handsaw and punched the deputy in the face.

Treisback failed to comply with lawful commands, resisting arrest in an attempt to escape. He was taken into custody using the necessary force to effect the arrest.

He is facing charges in Towns County for Felony Aggravated Assault on a Law Enforcement Official and Obstruction of an Officer.

Treisback was turned



Edward Compton Treisback

over to the U.S. Marshalls facing federal charges.

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

## Towns JDA, HOME Team unveil housing opportunity



News Special  
Towns County Herald

The Hiwassee, Young Harris and Towns County Joint Development Authority, along with the Towns County Housing Opportunity Models Emerge Team, is pleased to announce the prospect of safe, affordable housing for the local workforce.

The Valley Trail Apartment Complex is slated to be built in Towns County in 2024-2025. The apartment complex, proposed by Lowcountry Housing Communities, will consist of 49 units with an anticipated mix of one, two and three-bedroom units with monthly rental rates projected to be between \$700 and \$1,000.

"Let me be clear," said Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw, "this is not a Section 8 HUD-subsidized housing development."

The Valley Trail development will utilize the Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program to provide affordable housing. Residents will pay lower rents because the developer receives private investment dollars to construct this property in exchange for federal tax credits. There is no subsidy involved.

Teresa Stephens is the Community Resource Coordinator for Ninth District Opportunity, Inc. in Towns County, and the co-chair of the HOME Team. She is adamant that "this will be a classy and beautiful community, and the developer is committed to working with us to design a complex that will complement the surrounding area."

Applicants for this housing opportunity will undergo background checks. In addition, management will conduct frequent property inspections to ensure that the apartment

complex will continue to be an asset to the community.

"We are excited to offer this opportunity to our great neighbors: working couples with families, young adults beginning their foray into the workforce, and seniors looking to retire in our mountain towns," exclaimed Denise McKay, Economic Development Director for the communities of Hiwassee, Young Harris and Towns County.

"This area has very little to offer in terms of safe, affordable housing," McKay continued. "This development will give citizens who serve this community as educators, law enforcement, tradespeople, and service workers a fighting chance to live, grow and thrive in Towns County."

Lowcountry Housing Communities is currently awaiting project approval by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. Having built similar developments all over Georgia, they are confident in a positive outcome.

In the meantime, inter- *See Housing Opportunity, Page 8A*

## Sharp Memorial reopens after Christmas water damage



Members of Sharp Memorial UMC were happy to return to their home sanctuary for services on Sunday, June 18.

Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

By Brittany Holbrooks  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

YOUNG HARRIS - A pipe break over Christmas weekend caused major water damage inside Sharp Memorial United Methodist Church, resulting in closure over the last half year to complete repairs and renovations.

And earlier this month, the church hosted an Open House Block Party to let the community know that the

church was back - and stronger than ever.

On June 13, from 4-7 p.m., Sharp Memorial offered everything from tours around the inside of the church to sitting around a miniature bonfire roasting s'mores outside.

Everything started, according to Pastor Stephen Soulen, when temperatures dropped far below freezing on Christmas Eve of 2022. In fact, it was cold for some time before then, exacerbating the frig-

id environment in the church's plumbing.

"We were sub-zero for 24 (or) 48 hours," Program Director Tena Eddy Ferguson recalled, and that was what led to the disaster. Essentially, the water froze and shattered the pipes, starting a chain reaction that built up pressure in the sprinkler system, causing one sprinkler to burst.

"I know it very well; it's embedded because I was sitting *See Sharp UMC Reopens, Page 8A*

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Arrests - 2A Opinion - 4A  
Church - 4B Legals - 6B  
Classifieds - 6B Obits - 5B

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Chatuge 1,925.62  
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Towns Co. Civic Association Meeting June 29 *See page 2A*

Acoustic Sunset Summer Concert Series *See page 3A*

Zach Williams in Concert @ GMF July 8 *See page 8A*



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# Family Fun Day...from Page 1A

County Sheriff's Office.

Initially, the goal was to provide deputies with the funds needed to install new computers in the county's patrol cars. This was accomplished with the Summer Heat Music Festival, held in Summer 2022.

Fiorito, however, was led to do more. After "praying on it," he decided to set up a "safety net for all first responders."

Alongside the music festival committee, Fiorito established a nonprofit to do just that, making available limited financial assistance should first responders "suffer a debilitating illness or injury after having exhausted all vacation and sick leave and all other means of financial support."

Essentially, the fund "will be there to help them pay their bills" if a first responder becomes injured or sick and cannot work, Fiorito said.

Chief Deputy Gene Moss represented the Sheriff's Office at the event.

"We're excited at how the community has come together," Moss said, highlighting how thankful the Sheriff's Office is both for Summer Heat and the community in contributing financial support for first responders. "This is a great

county to live and do our job."

At 1 p.m. that Saturday, the Fire Department and Sheriff's Office competed in a game of kickball, billed "Guns N' Hoses," in which the Sheriff's Office came out as the victors.

Additionally, Fire Rescue was there with a simulation meant to help children understand what to do in case of a fire. The simulation, held in a mobile trailer, allowed firefighters to talk children through how to safely exit a home that has caught on fire.

"The kids love it," said Krista Massell, who works with the department.

The Blairsville Cruisers, led by Dick Couture, also held a car show at the event. The Cruisers work closely with first responders to help provide local children Christmas presents through events like Shop With the Sheriff. Couture also mentioned how the organization likes to support "any event to raise money for first responders."

Melanie Hughes, the manager of SouthState Bank, gave out free water to attendees. The bank was one of many sponsors for the event, but Hughes said she wanted to be there simply because she is "part of the community."

"First responders do a lot for us," Hughes said. "They come out when we need them, even if it's a false alarm."

Hughes also highlighted the Community Heroes Account offered by the bank, which is available for first responders, health care workers and educators.

Kathy Dalton and Gary Groves attended to support their son, who was performing at the event, but also pointed out how they had "so much fun" at last year's music festival and echoed the same sentiments for the June 17 offering. Hiawasse Mayor Liz Ordiales, who could be found in the dunk tank, wanted to thank the vendors and Summer Heat for putting the event together: "It's been a great turnout," she said.

Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw also expressed his gratitude for being "blessed with the opportunity to serve such a great community."

The Family Fun Day earlier this month was the first of many to come, with plans to hold an annual event every third Saturday in June moving forward.

For more information, visit <https://summerheattoftownscounty.square.site/>.



Several hundred guests turned out to support local first responders this month on Family Fun Day, which will return every year on the third Saturday in June. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

# Sharp UMC Reopens...from Page 1A



Sharp Memorial held an Open House for the church on June 13 after it had been closed for six months for renovations and repairs following major water damage. Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

here when the pipes busted," Soulen said, able to laugh about it now that the panic had long subsided. "It was a mess real quick, and the Fire Department was already on the (Young Harris College) campus trying to fix all the freezing, busted pipes over there. So, it was about an hour and a half before they got over here."

Since then, the church has not been used for services; for perspective, the last time Sharp Memorial's congregation gathered at the church to worship was on the Sunday before Christmas.

But now, the Sharp Memorial family is returning to their church home.

"This is a good mess now because we're almost done," Soulen said, comparing the lively bustle of that Tuesday evening with the earlier slog to clear out the flooded areas of debris. All in all, that took about a month, but before then, the church sat unoccupied and unchanged.

As the congregation held worship services in the Suber Banquet Hall, they waited for word back on an insurance settlement, playing it safe since the church is technically property of Young Harris College. Finally, Soulen asked if the carpet could be taken up at the very least, and that kickstarted the progress.

"You know, in many ways, it is (a blessing in disguise)," said Ferguson, admitting that after six months of holding services at the college, the relationship between the church and the college has improved exponentially.

"While we were up there, everybody was coming together for one service," Ferguson said, noting that even some college students became interested in attending church. "We felt connected. It's just been good in the community."

Indeed, their church family has grown in recent months, and the Sharp Memorial congregation has been looking forward to showing their new members a proper place of worship. And now,

they finally can.

Along the tour, Ferguson and Soulen pointed out various facets of the building that changed – and some that remained the same.

The downstairs level is dedicated to the aptly named Children's Area. Not only is it perfect for Bible School, but it also echoes the congregation's desire to turn it into a fully formed daycare to satisfy a pressing local need.

"The hope is within the next year or so to maybe have a preschool or an afterschool program – just some kind of childcare," Ferguson said.

Thankfully, the sanctuary and the nursery suffered no water damage, but, according to Ferguson, remodeling the rest of the classrooms called for a makeover of the latter. Along with that, there's also the addition of a full media center and a supply room.

Where there had once been sopping carpet and ruined tile, there's now the same laminate vinyl planks that lined the upstairs fellowship hall and kitchen. The illusion of pale hardwood floors pairs well with the cream walls to create a warm, sunny atmosphere perfect for kids.

That the sanctuary was spared is also "a blessing," said Ferguson, and she's right, considering the monumental size of that blessing. The sanctuary houses a 40-year-old pipe organ, a device so large that its inner workings must be maintained from doors on the other side of the wall.

The organ is what first drew Jerry Willis to the church. More accurately, it initially caught his wife's eye, and the pair decided to give Sharp Memorial a chance. Shortly thereafter, they realized they had found their spiritual home.

"When we got here three years ago, we were looking for a church," explained Willis, who traveled north with his wife from Gwinnett, where they lived for over three decades. "You know, sometimes you get drawn ... When you walk in the church and sit down, (there's)

just a presence of God."

Although the rehaul was necessary after the damage, the church has come out better because of it. According to Ferguson, some historical pieces of the church's past were unearthed during the cleaning. Now, with rediscovered information, Sharp Memorial has a wall dedicated to its history.

"It's amazing because you'd find things you didn't know you had," Ferguson said, pointing out posters that detailed important years in the church's lifetime all the way back to the 1800s.

"We're ready to get back home," Soulen said. "The main thing for us is to have ministry in the community and outreach. Your home is with God, and until we find that home, we're not really at home. To discover home is not only with God, but it's also with God's people – they remind you that this is a special place."

There was certainly something special in the air as Sharp Memorial's congregation returned home to sit outside and enjoy some barbecue courtesy of Jim's Smokin' Que and snow cones.

"Some people don't think that way about home because home wasn't that for them, but to find a spiritual home like this place is truly amazing and uplifting," Soulen continued, making a point of greeting everyone and welcoming them back personally. "And that's what home should be – a place that empowers you, a place that inspires you, a place that makes you a better person."

Soulen particularly looked forward to June 18, something he called "Welcome Home Sunday," which began with an 8:30 a.m. worship service and a 9:30 a.m. break for coffee and fellowship. Sunday school followed at 9:45 a.m., and after the 11 a.m. worship service, tours followed so that Soulen could welcome his people home properly.

Sharp Memorial United Methodist Church is located at 1114 Main Street in Young Harris.

# Housing Opportunity...from Page 1A

ested applicants are encouraged to join the waitlist by emailing [valleytrail@lchousing.com](mailto:valleytrail@lchousing.com), as residents will be selected on a first-come, first-served basis.

Lowcountry Housing Communities, LLC is an owner/developer of multi-family and senior real estate assets. LCHC has over 20 years of experience in the affordable housing industry, having completed 26 quality properties to date. LCHC has a flawless track record with its investors, lending and State Agency partners. LCHC is proud to bring quality affordable housing to

the residents and communities of Towns County.

The JDA was established in February 2020 through a Joint Resolution enacted by the cities and the county. Since its inception, the JDA has worked vigorously to address these communities' economic development goals, including spearheading the joint application between the cities and county to apply to the Georgia Initiative for Community Housing, which provides technical assistance related to housing and community development, examples

of best practices and lessons learned to help us with local housing development.

The Towns County HOME Team is a result of this initiative to create great spaces for great neighbors.

The JDA is a collaborative effort with the Mayors and County Commissioner focused on addressing the communities' economic development goals and extends the Authority's appreciation to its Executive Director, Denise McKay, for her patience, guidance and direction in making the JDA a success.

# Happy Birthday USA...from Page 1A

hosting a Home-Run Derby starting at 10 a.m.

Five dollars will get each participant five hits, but there will be a free game of kickball open to the community at two different times. For ages 8-12, bring the kiddos by at noon, and for ages 12 and up, show up at 1 p.m.

The Fairgrounds' celebrations will start much earlier than usual this year because there's so much planned. Guests are welcome to start coming at 3 p.m., and if they want to stay for the long haul, expect to be there until about 10 p.m., as fireworks will start going off at 9:45.

Thomason hopes to quite literally blow the celebration out of the park: "We want everyone to come out and have a

good time and enjoy it."

And if you still haven't had your fill of fireworks, come back to the Fairgrounds on the evening of July 6 to see True Youngblood perform live for the Acoustic Sunsets Summer Concert Series, every Thursday between now and July 27.

Born and raised in Hiawasse, Youngblood will come home to play at Hamilton Gardens, and after his performance, more fireworks will light up the sky.

Lake Chatuge Chamber of Commerce President Julie Payne confirmed that the chamber will once again be sponsoring its annual patriotic Boat Parade on July 4, which will launch at Sunset Cove and run from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

"You can register and pick up your (parade) application at the chamber office, or it can be accessed on our website, [www.golakechatuge.com](http://www.golakechatuge.com)," Payne said, adding that while it's preferable for folks to sign up beforehand, the parade can fit in applicants on Independence Day as well.

"They actually can register that day; we'll have someone down there," said Payne, adding that "the best places to view the parade (are) going to be the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds Boat Ramp (and) Anderson Bridge," though people can also get a good view from the Old Rec Gym.

For information on other local Fourth of July events, visit <http://www.golakechatuge.com>.