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Fourth of July Boat Parade brings patriotic feelings to Lake Chatuge

By Jarrett Whitener
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Visitors gathered by the hundreds around Lake Chatuge near the Towns County Beach and Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds for the annual Fourth of July Boat Parade.

Sponsored by the Towns County Chamber of Commerce, the parade featured plenty of boats decorated to fit the red, white, and blue theme matching the bold colors of the American flag.

The parade started behind Sunset Bay Condominiums and went over by the county beach, which was a longer path than usual to allow people to spread out more to watch the parade.

With a turnout of around 30 boats, the parade served as a successful local attraction bringing in people from all over

to see the show.

"We came down from Seneca, South Carolina," said Selene Jones. "We are visiting some friends up in Tennessee, and we passed through here and wanted to stop to see what was going on today."

"I've never been here before, and it's just beautiful to watch these boats go by and great to have something like this to do in this area. I would definitely come back if I was ever around again."

The Chamber of Commerce likes to host events such as the boat parade that unite folks, despite the many differences people always seem to have.

"This is important because everybody is getting together for one reason and everybody is showing their pride in the USA," said Chamber President Candace Lee. "When you first

start seeing the boats, you actually want to cry, because it is all these people watching and getting together and getting excited about celebrating the United States.

"I just think that this is so important, especially now with all the problems going around today."

Many guests agreed that having a community event like the boat parade was beneficial for Towns County and Lake Chatuge, as people got to experience the lake on a beautiful day with others.

"Celebrating the Fourth is great, and it brings people together," said local resident Lynda Shook. "It's important for our children to see everybody get together as one and see everyone celebrate this one thing."

"It's also good for the
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One of many patriotic boats decorated specifically for the Fourth of July Boat Parade on Lake Chatuge.
Photo by Lowell Nicholson

Fairgrounds puts freedom front and center with Independence Day celebration

By Chad Stack
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Area patriots gathered inside the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds on July Fourth to celebrate America's 243rd birthday.

For the sixth year in a row, members of the North Mt. Zion Church of God, along with Pastor Raburne Wilson, set up numerous booths and activities for children, like face painting, bounce houses and a dunk tank.

"We're just trying to share the love with the people in our community," Wilson said. "We appreciate the people in the community. They've been very good to the people at North Mt. Zion, and this is our way of saying we love you and we appreciate you."

Towns County Sheriff Chris Clinton served the evening's musical entertainment with his band, "The Chris Clinton Band," in which he plays guitar and his wife Crystal plays bass.

The Chris Clinton Band performed from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. on a small stage in front of the Fairgrounds main office.

"We do a lot of shows at the Fairgrounds," said Clinton. "We opened for the



The Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds hosted a longer fireworks show in 2019 than in previous July Fourth celebrations.
Photo by Lowell Nicholson

Oak Ridge Boys, and we also perform every year during the Moonshine Cruiz-In."

Clinton said that something truly great began 243 years ago when the 13 American Colonies declared

their independence from Great Britain, paving the way for all of us as Americans to have the rights we enjoy today.

With the Fourth of July being on a Thursday this year,
See Fairgrounds, Page 8A

Hamilton receives Blue Ribbon Award for school transportation safety

By Chad Stack
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Every year, hundreds of students load up on buses that take them to and from one of the three Towns County Schools.

And every year, parents rely on the buses and their drivers to safely transport their precious cargo – the county's children – to and from school.

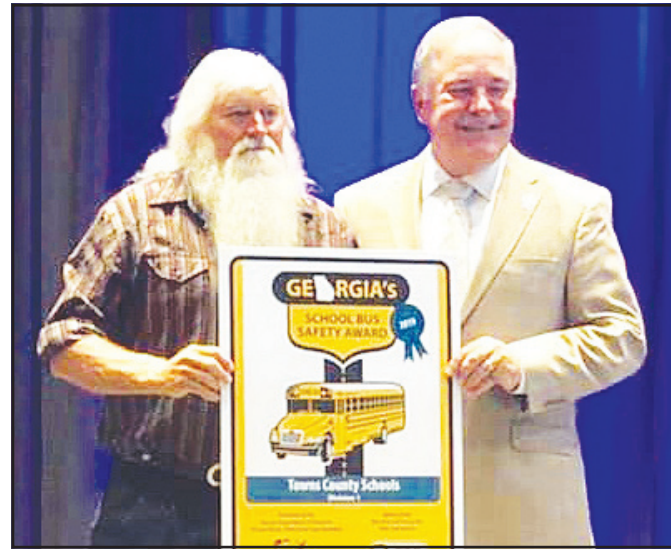
That's why, according to School Transportation Director Scott Hamilton, transportation safety is such a high priority at Towns County Schools.

Fortunately, his efforts and those of his staff have not gone unnoticed.

On June 17, State School Superintendent Richard Woods awarded Hamilton with Georgia's School Bus Safety Award in Division One, which encompasses the transportation of up to 1,260 full-time students.

Specifically, Hamilton received the Blue Ribbon Award based on safety, effectiveness, reporting and leadership.

"I am so grateful that we were selected for this award,"



Towns County School Transportation Director Scott Hamilton accepting the School Bus Safety Award from State School Superintendent Richard Woods on June 17. Photo/submitted

Hamilton said. "We work very hard to make sure our students have safe and reliable transportation to and from school."

"The students, parents, teachers, coaches, parents on me, my staff and the bus drivers to make sure that our students make it to school and home from school and field

trips. We also must provide a safe and dependable bus ride for our athletic teams."

Towns County administrators, along with Hamilton, require all of their bus drivers to exceed the state-mandated 12-hour driver instruction course to ensure the safety of students, Hamilton

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Young Harris to hold July 30 public hearing on water rate increases

By Jarrett Whitener
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

YOUNG HARRIS – As discussed in numerous public meetings over the last several months, the city of Young Harris will soon be increasing its water rates to better recover operating costs moving forward.

"If everything went, budget-wise, according to the way we set it up, we would be \$68,868 in the hole," said Councilman Steve Clark in the July 2 regular city meeting.

Based on the fact that the city's water treatment plant is currently experiencing negative operating revenues, the council has decided to increase water rates for customers across the board.

"We really don't have the money to fix the things



Young Harris Mayor Andrea Gibby

that break around here," Clark said. "We've got sort of ticking timebombs like water rates

that are ultimately going to need to be repainted and maintained
See Water Rates, Page 6A

County purchases new Computer-Aided Dispatch System for \$212,726

By Chad Stack
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw and Roberts met for a special called meeting on July 2 to update the county's emergency Computer-Aided Dispatch System.

During the meeting, Bradshaw signed a contract approving the purchase of a newly updated emergency 911 CAD System, which will cost the county \$212,726.

"That is a tremendous amount of money, but it's a lot less than what I was told we were going to have to spend when I came into office," Bradshaw said. "We were in the neighborhood of \$400,000, I thought."

CAD Systems aid 911 dispatchers by allowing them to efficiently organize and deliver an amazing amount



Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw signing a contract on July 2 to purchase a new CAD System for use by 911 Dispatch.
Photo by Chad Stack

of information regarding emergency calls and dispatched units.

The new 911 CAD System that was approved in the meeting is an upgraded

version of the same system the county currently operates, and White County is the only other county in the surrounding area to use this upgraded CAD.
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Turf field installation well underway with Aug. 15 completion target

By Chad Stack
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Construction for the new \$1 million artificial turf football/soccer field in Frank McClure Memorial Stadium is moving right along, with the actual turf installation scheduled to begin on Tuesday, July 16.

The new turf field completion deadline is Aug. 15, which is one day before the Indians travel to Lumpkin County for their first pre-season scrimmage under new Indians Head Football Coach Jason Roquemore.

"We are hoping they will be finished before that date," School Superintendent Dr. Darren Berrong said. "They have removed all the sod and topsoil and have begun installing the drainage system."

The Boys in Blue will host their season opener and first regular season game when they take on archrivals the Yellowjackets from Hayesville, North Carolina, at home on Friday, Aug. 23, at 7:30 p.m.

Towns County geared up again for practice on Monday, July 8, after "Dead Week," going from three days a week

to four days a week. They are currently still practicing at the field above the football and baseball fields.

However, once the new artificial turf field is finished, they will be able to hold practices on the main field without having to worry about damaging any grass before "Friday Night Lights."

The Indian Raider Marching Band will also be able to practice on the new field during the week instead of having to use the parking lot to prepare for halftime shows.

Stadium seating is being
See Turf, Page 8A



Heavy equipment operating last week on what used to be the Towns County football field, soon to be replaced with state-of-the-art artificial turf.
Photo by Chad Stack

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