

Car Museum...from Page 1A



L-R: Rakes Parrish, Jerry & June Smith, and Hilda Thomason together at the July 25 soft opening of Memory Lane Classic Car Museum in Young Harris. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

community.
 “It is kind of a love/hate, because we like our sleepy little community, and that is going away. This moves that agenda forward. I think it is wonderful. This is something that more people in our retirement community can enjoy, and it brings people here.”
 The museum will officially open on Thursday, July 30, coinciding with the first day of the three-day Georgia Mountain Moonshine Cruiz-In at the Fairgrounds. Entry into the museum is \$5, with children 12 and under getting in free.

Proceeds from the business will be used to donate to a diverse range of local charities and organizations, including the Mountain Shelter Humane Society, Future Farmers of America, Veterans of Foreign Wars and anything else in the community that needs assistance.
 “To me, being here is like being part of a big family,” Smith said. “I can donate to charity and help people that need help. I feel like I have been very blessed, and I can give back to the community.”
 As for the cars, the large

collection features a variety of makes and models Smith has obtained over the last 30 years.
 “I love old cars, and as you can tell, I don’t have one particular make or model or year,” Smith said. “I like them all. If I had to say I had a favorite, I’d have to say I like an old ‘57 Chevrolet, but I don’t know that I have any favorites. I like every color and every model over the years.”
 The museum is located at 1195 Jack Dayton Circle where Fun World used to be, next to VIP Fieldstone.

Coronavirus...from Page 1A

other labor. It is crazy that it has gone on this long. It needs to stop.”
 Towns County resident Brantley Belew supports the requirements that stores put in place, he said, so long as they take their own rules seriously.
 “Well, I don’t mind the masks much at all,” said Belew at the Young Harris Dollar General Saturday. “I think that if they are going to require a mask in their store, then they should at least enforce it.”
 “I went to Walmart in Blairsville a few days ago, and people were just taking them off as soon as they went through the door. Stores around here can tell us to wear them

if they want, but I just think it looks bad for them if you walk in the store and nobody is doing it.
 “Even the cashiers just now had them pulled down and not covering their faces. Like I said, I don’t mind the requirement, but if they are going to say we have to wear them, they need to make sure those employees keep them on, too.”
 Despite the hard times that the pandemic has brought on, people like Cid Young of Tennessee remain optimistic and accepting of new opportunities and lifestyle changes.
 “I have been trying to think more positive about

everything,” said Young at Ingles July 24. “We are in a pandemic, and that is scary for a lot of people and harming even more people. You have to look for some bright side, though. People are starting to be cleaner, and they are being cautious about things.”
 “On top of that, I have been able to spend more time with my family, and it has really shown me my priorities. Before, I worked six days a week and relaxed on my day off, and now, I work less hours and focus more on them.”
 “Without this virus, people would still be stuck in their routines. You can use this time to grow and change.”

Early Voting...from Page 1A

District race, on the Republican side are Matt Gurtler and Andrew Clyde, while the Democratic ticket features Devin Pandey and Brooke Siskin. Whoever wins their respective party nomination on Aug. 11 will face the other party nominee on Nov. 3.
 Since this is a primary runoff, voters who participated in the June 9 election must vote with the same political party. People who selected nonpartisan ballots during the primary, as well as individuals who did not vote in the primary, must choose a party to vote in the runoff.
 Election Day will be Tuesday, Aug. 11, from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., and that day, voters should report to one of the three pre-assigned Towns County voting precincts: Hiawassee at the Civic Center; Young Harris at the Lodge Hall Building, aka Stephens Lodge; and Macedonia at Macedonia Baptist Church.
 As previously reported, the Elections Board voted in May to move all precincts to Hiawassee for the June 9 election, as the private buildings hosting the Young Harris and Macedonia precincts had closed for COVID-19. The Board Office was also struggling to recruit poll workers amid coronavirus concerns.
 However, following the recent lifting of statewide restrictions, the Elections Board decided to reopen all polling places for Election Day voting, as both private buildings are now open to the public, and recruitment efforts have proven successful in providing enough poll workers to staff the

precincts.
 Allowing Election Day voting at all three precincts should improve line conditions and voting wait times that impacted the June 9 election at the Hiawassee Precinct, which resulted in many complaints and requests for reopening of the other precincts.
 And as positive COVID-19 cases continue to mount, Elections Board members have retained the option of falling back on the emergency plan of hosting all voting at the Hiawassee Precinct should former statewide restrictions be implemented once again.
 Poll workers are following COVID-19 best practices, including social distancing enforcement, regular equipment sanitation and wearing of masks during voting. Voters are encouraged but not required to wear facial coverings, which are being made available alongside hand sanitizer.
 Additionally, voters are not required to bring their mailed precinct cards, but they must show a valid photo ID to vote.
 Registered voters who will be at least 18 years of age by Election Day are eligible to vote during early voting, though July 13 was the registration deadline for voters looking to participate in the Aug. 11 election.
 People may request mail-in absentee ballots or inquire about their absentee status by visiting the Secretary of State’s Office website at sos.ga.gov, calling the Board Office at 706-896-4353 or swinging by in person.

For the rest of the year, absentee ballots will be automatically mailed to voters who informed the Board Office they were elderly or disabled on a previous application, though all others need to apply for mail-in absentee ballots on a per-election basis.
 People wanting to fill out their absentee ballots/applications and drop them off in person can do so using a specially marked box outside the Board Office, and this can be done up to 7 p.m. on Aug. 11.
 An absentee ballot/application must be submitted by the voter requesting one, except for a disabled person, who may have a relative by blood or marriage return his or her absentee ballot/application.
 Those who receive an absentee ballot by mail but decide to vote in person will need to have their absentee ballot canceled at time of voting.
 Voters can access.mvp.sos.ga.gov ahead of the election for information on voter registration status, mail-in application and ballot status, poll location, registration information on file with the county office, sample ballots and more.
 It should be noted that voters are not allowed to display campaign-related materials at polling places where promoted candidates appear on ballots. For example, for the Nov. 3 election, voters will not be allowed to enter polling places wearing clothing promoting Donald Trump or Joe Biden for president.

Firefighters...from Page 1A

to the commissioner and Sons of the American Revolution for the recognition.
 Sellers and Copeland are old friends, having fought fires together for decades, going all the way back to the start of Towns’ first multi-station fire department.
 Local fire department history dates to the mid-20th century, when a group of local men formed the county’s first fire department in Hiawassee using an old civil defense firetruck. Unfortunately, their equipment fell into disrepair due to lack of funds, and the men lost interest.
 Then in 1979, a massive fire that destroyed a Young Harris home prompted former Mayor Irene Berry to approach Sellers and others about starting a fire department in Young Harris.
 Before things could get going, however, the volunteers had to become certified firefighters, so Berry contacted the Georgia Fire Academy, which sent instructors to Young Harris to conduct training.
 The Young Harris Fire Department began with a small pumper truck that could only hold 250 gallons of water, four sets of turnout gear, two breathing apparatus, and ladders and hoses.
 1980 marked the first year for the Young Harris department, and it became apparent after several years

that having a single fire station serving as the only source of fire protection for the entire county was simply unsustainable.
 Copeland joined Sellers as a volunteer at the Young Harris department in 1983, and in 1985, after consulting with Copeland and other firefighters in Young Harris, Sellers decided to approach then newly elected Commissioner Truman Barrett to see about solving the problem.
 Barrett told Sellers that, if he would be the fire chief for the new county fire department, then he as commissioner would help him to raise the needed funds.
 Sellers said he’d serve as fire chief so long as he could bring along Copeland as the county’s first assistant fire chief. Barrett agreed, thereafter contacting the governor and state legislators to secure a \$115,000 grant to be used for a countywide fire service.
 The grant money enabled Sellers and Copeland to map out four fire station locations throughout the county, which ultimately helped maximize the Fire Department’s reach and lower the cost of fire insurance to the county.
 Resulting from an ad in the Towns County Herald, 65 candidates applied for firefighter training in January 1986, with 56 graduating six months later.
 And with help from local

churches and each community to be served by the planned stations, residents and the county teamed up to build the firehouses on donated land, enabling the establishment of a certified Georgia Fire Department on July 8, 1986, with a total of five stations.
 Shortly after the Towns County Fire Department became state certified, Station No. 2 in Young Harris purchased a used rescue truck from Union County.
 Each of the five stations also developed a local auxiliary group to help raise money for firehouse equipment, and that tradition continues to this day with the consolidated Towns County Fire Corps.
 Presently, the Fire Department has tanker trucks and 1,000-gallon fire engines at all six stations in Towns, a 75-foot ladder truck, a Dive Team for search and rescue operations on Lake Chatuge, vehicle extrication tools in every rescue truck and much more.
 Pertaining to the fire station being built on SR 66 in Young Harris, Bradshaw planned construction around utilizing detainee labor to save money. Work is almost completed, but those crews have become unavailable due to COVID-19, and Bradshaw is hopeful that work will resume before too long.

Graduation...from Page 1A

“able to graduate and have pictures taken without a mask on their face,” so the social distancing measures are that much more important.
 “We will have all the bleachers open, and people can sit around the outside of the field on the other side of the fence,” Perren said. “We encourage guests to bring a chair, because most of the seats are those concrete ones.”
 The ceremony itself is for invited guests and family members of the students, with no tickets or limit to how many guests may attend. For those attending, the school recommends bringing water to drink, since it will still be a warm summer day, even into the evening.
 People who feel uncomfortable attending the ceremony can tune in via Facebook Live, where the High School will broadcast the event.
 It’s been a rollercoaster of a year for these graduates, who had to leave off in-class

instruction in the middle of March. That’s why the commencement exercises are so significant to this crop of graduates, as they will bring some closure to the abrupt end of the school year.
 “These are great kids, they have proven to be resilient,” Perren said. “I cannot imagine going through 13 years of school, if you count kindergarten, and getting down to the last nine weeks, and all the activities that you have prepared for to celebrate have been canceled.”
 “There was no prom, no honors day, no baccalaureate. We did do the parade for them, though. This is real, real important. The governor released his guidelines about groups and such, but schools were specifically excluded from the limit of 50, and that is in his guidelines.”
 “We are following the guidelines. This is just so important for these kids to have the closure for their school experience. Many of them will

be heading off to college the next week.”
 Perren worries that the Class of 2021 will face many of the same challenges as the previous year, and perhaps more, since they are beginning their senior year during the pandemic, though only time will tell if as many activities are affected this upcoming school year.
 “I think in some way, it could be more disruptive for them than it was for the Class of 2020,” Perren said. “The Class of 2020 got through football, basketball and got to have those seasons and whatnot.”
 “They got to March 13, literally the last nine weeks of school, before they had to leave. This next class will be starting the new school year with some changes.”
 Stay tuned to the Towns County High School Facebook page for a rain contingency should one become necessary graduation night.

COVID Update...from Page 1A

“I can tell you this, too, from the (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) – of the people who do get COVID, only about 3 percent of them suffer severe symptoms,” Ide said. “That’s just seeing it firsthand, I can tell you that, but that’s also on the CDC website.”
 Added Ide, “The testing of people that we have done ranges from Towns County residents to neighboring county residents, to residents all throughout Georgia (and from) other states across the nation.”
 She also reported that, since the Towns County Health Department was hosting specimen collections, an employee of the Union County Health Department had been designated to conduct contact tracing for locally confirmed cases.
 Currently, Ide said test results are taking between 7-10 days to return, adding that “it was happening a little quicker, but our testing numbers at each event seems to go up each time.”
 “And we don’t turn anybody away,” she said. “They can show up at the event, we take down all their information and get them in there. We’re not turning people away.”
 Free COVID-19 testing is taking place at the Towns Health Department Fridays between 8:30 a.m. and 1 p.m., and people are being asked to call their local health department to schedule an appointment.
 As of press time Sunday, from Towns County, 98 residents had tested positive, 16 people had been hospitalized since the start of the pandemic, and only one death had occurred.
 Also in the meeting, Bradshaw offered an update to county finances amid the novel coronavirus, saying that the county “did take a hit in April and May for our sales tax collections.”
 “However, it has bounced back – we’re doing very well,” he said. “It’s too early to tell yet if we’re going to make up for what we had lost, but to be

honest with you, the county is in much better financial shape than I thought we would be in at this time.”
 “We’re also taking great caution and care on spending any money. I’m being more frugal right now than I have ever been as your commissioner, because we don’t know what this fall and this winter’s going to do – we have no idea. We could see a downturn in collections that could hit us heavy, we really just don’t know. It depends on the virus.”
 “Right now, we’re doing very well, but we’re going to be very frugal just to make sure that we watch every penny that comes in, and we watch every penny that goes out, so we’ll keep a tight rein on it.”
 In new business, Bradshaw signed a local share commitment letter and agreement with Legacy Link Area Agency on Aging in the amount of \$11,450 to secure federal and state monies to operate the Towns County Senior Center, which offers programs benefiting local elderly and disabled residents.
 Additionally, he approved a larger local share amount of \$112,052 for Senior Center operations “to match and supplement federal and state monies for congregate meals at the center, home-delivered meals, wellness programs and transportation for Towns County seniors.”
 In his Commissioner’s Report, Bradshaw encouraged people to vote during the early in-person voting period between now and Aug. 7 to cut down on Aug. 11 Election Day crowds amid COVID-19.
 He went on to commend the Towns County Road Department for all the lawncare they’ve been keeping up with around the county, which is typically handled by detainee crews currently unavailable due to the pandemic.
 The commissioner also thanked the staff of the Towns County Recreation Department for taking care of lawncare at Foster Park and at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds ballfields.

“And to all the county employees during all this COVID, so many of them have stepped up,” Bradshaw said. “They’re doing extra things to help other employees, and to help them stay safe. They’re just doing a great job, and everybody is working in harmony.”
 “I’m really, really thankful for that – things are going pretty smooth for the conditions that we’re living in right now.”
 Bradshaw reported that the county had been fogging various public buildings to kill any lingering COVID-19 virus, including the Civic Center where early in-person voting is taking place, as well as the courthouse and various areas inside the Recreation and Conference Center.
 And while he said local government couldn’t mandate mask use, he encouraged residents to wear masks when they venture out in public, though masks are being mandated inside the courthouse per judicial order.
 At the very end of the meeting, habitual attendee Joan Crothers asked about potential road safety improvements at Shake Rag leading up to Bell Mountain Park, which residents there have been requesting.
 “We’ve got a company looking at the road,” Bradshaw said. “They’re supposed to get back in touch with me the second week of August with a plan ... to make improvements to the road.”
 “So, I’m going on their word that they’ll be back in touch with me with their plan the second week of August. Of course, that could turn out to be the third week – you know how that goes – but I can’t wait to see their suggestions.”
 “Based on their suggestions, we’ll probably get into wintertime, and we’ll probably have to close the park down temporarily to do these things, and we plan on doing that. So, we’re going to be looking at a lot of things to make the park road safer. We’re excited and we’re ready to do it, for sure.”