

Towns County Herald

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County schoolchildren ready to hit the books

By Brittany Holbrooks
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

It's back to school for Towns County, and as of the first day of classes on Friday, Aug. 4, the year is off to a great start. As bittersweet as it always is when summer ends, teachers, students and parents were all excited to see where the new year takes them.

High School Math Teacher Jenni Harper can speak as an educator and a parent, and during her planning period, she admitted she had missed the routine – and suspected her own children had also.

In Harper's own words, there are things to accomplish during summer, but knowing she's making a positive impact in the lives of Towns County's

youth draws a different kind of satisfaction.

"I'm glad to be back, and truly, we have really good kids," Harper said. "We have great students, so I really can't complain. I mean, even the ones that might drive you a little crazy are still good kids, you still see good things in them, so I'm not going to complain at all."

Meanwhile, right across the hallway, Art Cartee was enjoying his eighth day as a science teacher at Towns County. Around 2020, he moved from the much more urban Paulding County in the Metro Atlanta area to Hayesville, North Carolina, then landed a job as a coach in Hiwassee.

"This is my 27th year (in teaching), and I've got to say, probably one of the best first

days ever," Cartee said with a smile. "I look out my door and I see the beautiful mountains and sky. A bald eagle earlier today was flying by. I absolutely love it."

In a twist of roles, Cartee said his students have been helping to teach him the local ways that came with moving to the mountains, and he has been pleasantly surprised by their politeness.

"Some of the language up here is a little different with the 'yins' and the 'yorns,' and they're really good (about explaining), 'For that, that's 'you' and 'yours,'" Cartee laughed. "The culture just brings you in, into the mountains like this."

Describing the opportunity to work at Towns as "a dream," Cartee said he really

See Back to School, Page 8A



Students said goodbye to summer vacation at the start of the 2023-24 school year on Friday. Slow down – and stop when necessary – for buses! Photo by Lowell Nicholson

Lions Club dedicates funnel cake trailer to Gutenstein



Lions Club members posing with Mayor Liz Ordiales and Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw with "The Gutenstein" – the club's funnel cake trailer named after beloved former member of the community Gerry Gutenstein. Photo by Natalie Mintz

By Natalie Mintz
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Hiwassee's Night Market returned to the Town Square on Aug. 4 for the biggest "First Friday" outing in the event's history, complete with over 30 vendors to include several newcomers.

Held every first Friday of the month from May through October, the event, sponsored by the Hiwassee Downtown

Development Authority, gives patrons ample opportunities to shop, enjoy food and drinks, and listen to live music together as a community.

This past Friday featured a very special occasion, as the Towns County Lions Club dedicated its funnel cake trailer to Gerry Gutenstein. Gutenstein recently moved to Florida but was a member of the Lions Club and generally an active member of the community for

many years.

"Gerry was the consummate community helper," said Mayor Liz Ordiales, noting that he "was part of just about every organization we have."

"He would come to all of my City Council meetings," she added, saying that "he always gave me great advice."

"We wanted to do this for him because he was so involved in everything the Lions

See Night Market, Page 3A

Sheriff's Office awarded State Certification by GACP

News Special
Towns County Herald

Sheriff Ken Henderson and the Towns County Sheriff's Office were awarded State Certification from the Georgia Association of Chiefs of Police on Sunday, July 23, at their award ceremony in Savannah during the Summer Training Conference.

The State Certification Program is voluntary and comprises management, operational and service standards that are administered by the Georgia Association of Chiefs of Police.

Agencies participating in the program are required to be reviewed every three years. Compliance with the standards allows the Towns County Sheriff's Office to provide its community with the highest level of professionalism.

State Certification has been a priority for Sheriff Henderson's administration since he entered office in January 2021.

As Sheriff Henderson entered office, the Towns County Sheriff's Office was preparing for its State Certification review when it became abundantly clear that the Sheriff's Office would not be able to attain this highly coveted certification based off the previous



Towns County Sheriff Ken Henderson and State Certification Manager Bobbie Shook at the recent GACP Summer Training Conference in Savannah. Photo/Facebook

administrations' efforts. The sheriff made the difficult decision to withdraw at that time to ensure the agency was progressing toward compliance and reapply under his administration.

Receiving State Certification is an extreme honor for the Towns County Sheriff's Office. This entire process would

not have been accomplished without Sheriff Henderson's unwavering commitment to professionalism and service to the citizens of Towns County.

Sheriff Henderson would like to thank his staff and give a special thanks to State Certification Manager Bobbie Shook for her steadfast commitment to attaining this certification.

Area student Teutsch elected Governor of Girls State

By Brittany Holbrooks
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Rabun Gap-Nacoochee School student Juliette Teutsch represented American Legion Auxiliary Post 23 at the 2023 Georgia Girls State Program in preparation for chasing her dream to one day go into international relations.

"Girls State began as one- and two-day sessions in the late 1930s," per georgiagirlsstate.org. "In 1939, Girls State was expanded to make it a week-long government education program. Since 1948, it has been a regular part of the Auxiliary's Americanism curriculum."

"For more than 50 years, the American Legion Auxiliary has succeeded in giving these girls the finest citizenship training program possible. The program has grown from a few hundred participants to nearly 20,000 Girls State delegates annually (across all 50 states)."

After the event's start on June 11 and her return home

See Governor Teutsch, Page 5A



Juliette Teutsch did her area proud being elected by her peers as Georgia Girls State Governor, which earned her the opportunity to speak at the American Legion Auxiliary Department of Georgia annual conference. Photo/Facebook

Pierot imparts road rules in 'Drive to Stay Alive' talk

By Natalie Mintz
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Members of the Mountain Movers & Shakers welcomed retired law enforcement officer Jeff Pierot to educate them about safe-driving practices in their weekly breakfast meeting on Friday, July 28.

Pierot began by talking about the importance of maintaining a safe distance between cars on the roadway.

"At 55 miles per hour," he explained, "you are traveling 80 feet per second. By the time a person reacts, it is possible to travel half the length of a football field."

He suggested following the "two-second rule." To do this, drivers can count two seconds after the car in front of them has passed a specific object, like a street sign, and keep at least that much distance between the cars.

Next, he addressed the importance of always wearing a seatbelt, calling the safety device "an incredible mechanism" while noting that "it is



Mountain Movers & Shakers Leader William "Scotty" Scott with July 28 guest speaker Jeff Pierot. Photo by Natalie Mintz

very important how you wear it."

Pierot told the group to make sure they are not moving the seatbelt out of place and are adjusting it for the correct height, as an appropriately worn seatbelt will absorb the

"majority of the force" during a crash instead of the occupants of a vehicle.

He also warned against putting a seatbelt under the arm. Not only is this ineffective during a crash, the seat-

See Drive to Stay Alive, Page 3A

2 Sections 16 Pages

Vol. 94 No. 41

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



Lake Levels

Blue Ridge 1,684.14
Chatuge 1,924.20
Nottely 1,773.57

SOFTBALL

8/10 - 5 PM

@ North Murray

Purple Heart Day Info

See page 5A

Georgia Mtn. Fair Aug. 18-26

See page 1B

Quilt of Valor Recipient

See page 1B



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Hiawassee Night Market...from Page 1A



The Hiawassee Night Market boasted its largest ever turnout from vendors last week, with two remaining events on the first Fridays of September and October. Photo by Natalie Mintz

did," said Ronnie Whelchel regarding the club's decision to officially dub the funnel cake trailer "The Gutenstein."

Whelchel, a former president and current member of the Lions Club, called Gutenstein "a mentor," pointing out that Gutenstein was part of the initial decision to buy the successful funnel cake trailer in the first place.

Jeff Myers, also a member of the Lions Club, said that Gutenstein taught them "how to run the funnel cake booth."

"I miss him terribly," Ordiales shared, but ultimately, she knows that going to Florida "was the right move for him and his family."

In addition to the funnel cake booth, the market wel-

comed a variety of food trucks for attendees that Friday evening. Guests could also shop from the 30 craft vendors set up around the square selling goods such as jewelry, glassworks, leather products, spices and more.

Kimberly and Ken Tringali of Cabin Fused Glass offered their glassworks at the event. They recently moved to

the area and cited the "mountains and lakes" as inspiration for their work.

"This is a great place to be," Kimberly said.

The market attracts many locals and members of the community. Stephen Smith is a retired Towns County teacher and superintendent, as well as a former Hiawassee councilman, and he "loves to come to first Fridays," adding that the events are "very well attended."

"It's a nice, fun time," Smith said.

Vendor Jessie Tulba sold handmade jewelry that evening. She noted that the Night Market is "a good way to make connections in the community" and "get the word out" about a business.

Mark and Kyrie Sauve have lived in Hiawassee for a little over a year, having moved to the area after their daughter, Annalise, went to college: "We're thrilled to be here; we love it," Kyrie said.

"We keep coming because we want it to keep growing," she added about the market.

The next Night Market will take place from 5-9 p.m. on Friday, Sept. 1, with the season coming to a close on Friday, Oct. 6, so be sure to check out the two remaining First Friday events of 2023.

Downtown Development Authority raised \$117,000 to benefit the Paris Business Center



The Hiawassee Downtown Development Authority (DDA) announced that it has recently raised \$117,000 to benefit the Paris Business Center (PBC).

On July 15, at the Ridges Resort on Lake Chatuge, the DDA hosted more than 700 people for a night of music and a silent auction that included baskets, gift certificates and international travel. "This was a wonderful evening and while the DDA board has not yet voted to hold a similar event in 2024, it's likely a repeat will take place," said Denise McKay, director of economic development for Hiawassee, Young Harris and Towns County. "The feedback from our surveys showed everyone really enjoyed the evening and while there are always things we can improve, the overall response was it was an outstanding event for a good cause."

In addition, the DDA was recently notified that it won a grant from the USDA in the amount of \$92K for the furnishings and electronics needed for the Paris Business Center. The DDA submitted the paperwork in Feb. of 2023 and committed to matching \$10K in DDA funds. The grant is part of the Rural Business Development Grant program,



Mayor Ordiales with Lamar Paris, Union County Sole Commissioner

which is designed to provide technical assistance and training for small rural businesses. Small is defined as a business with fewer than 50 new workers and less than \$1 million in gross revenue.

"This is the second grant received from the USDA for the Paris Business Center," said McKay. "The first grant was for \$67K to stabilize the two historic buildings. We are so grateful to the USDA for its continued support of the DDA and the region's small businesses."

The PBC is the first, and only, full-service, regional business development center, serving North Georgia, and parts of western North Carolina and eastern Tennessee. The PBC office will be in one of two newly renovated historic buildings in downtown

Hiawassee (estimated opening date early 2024.) The PBC and its partners help new or existing businesses start, expand, or retain their company through development of business plans; classes in marketing, bookkeeping, human resources, management; as well as helping with finding financing options. The PBC currently serves clients through the Economic Development Office located in Hiawassee City Hall.

The Hiawassee Downtown Development Authority was formed by the Hiawassee City Council in 2019 and was established for the purpose of furthering the economic development of our lake and mountain paradise while preserving Hiawassee's history and serving its citizens and visitors alike.



Jason Lee, Dinah Paris, Dan Paris, Cherilynn Lemmon's, Lamar Paris, Greg Brogdon, Lyric Brogdon, Sandra Cobb, Kevin Adamson

Drive to Stay Alive...from Page 1A

belt can produce enough force to "cut an arm off" in a crash. Pierot explained that wearing a seatbelt like this increases the chances of it breaking ribs as well.

Moving on, Pierot explained how airbags work in an accident. The airbag is meant to "catch and decelerate you slowly," he said, to keep a person's internal organs from shooting forward in a crash.

Pierot then expressed his fears around advancing technology in cars. Not only do people have cellphones to be distracted by, cars are now easier to drive than they were in the past. This means people are paying less attention to the road than they would be driving a manual shift car.

Lastly, he explained the importance of not driving after drinking, and he broke down the two types of DUIs he typically encountered over his career. He referred to these as a "medical DUI and an "ar-

rogant DUI."

A medical DUI occurs when someone has an addiction and "needs to get help," while an "arrogant DUI" happens when someone "knows better" than to drive while impaired but does so anyway.

He referred to alcohol as a "time bomb," meaning that the effects of alcohol are not felt immediately after drinking, especially if someone is eating at the same time. Instead, the body has to process the food before it can process the alcohol.

"If you are at dinner and have a few wines, you can walk out to your car and think 'I'm fine,'" he explained. "Fifteen minutes later, your blood alcohol level goes up."

Pierot added that most people also underestimate how much alcohol they are actually drinking.

"One beer is really the equivalent of two drinks," he

said, and a glass of wine "is really two to three drinks."

He noted that there are three main warning signs people should heed when deciding whether to drive after drinking.

"If you have to stop and think, 'I'm OK,' you're not," he said. The next warning sign is if someone is trying to calculate how much alcohol they have consumed per drink. The last is, "If you are doing field sobriety tests on yourself," then "you are definitely not OK" to drive.

He ended his discussion by asking attendees to "please cooperate" with these rules, because the "worst part of the job" was when he had to tell people that their loved ones had died in a crash.

The Mountain Movers & Shakers meet every Friday at 8 a.m. at the Sundance Grill in Hiawassee. Anyone in the community is welcome to attend.

Governor Teutsch...from Page 1A

from Valdosta State University campus on June 16, Teutsch paid a visit to Veterans of Foreign Wars Post #7807 in Hiawassee on Tuesday, Aug. 1, to fill in local Auxiliary members about her highly successful trip.

Auxiliary Post 23 President Robin Halfon oversees Towns' involvement in Girls State, which is modeled after its Boys State counterpart that began to counter Communist recruitment following the Great Depression by fostering a deeper understanding and respect for American democracy.

The "well-rounded" civic leadership program for young men offers a variety of activities to promote learning and is especially useful for those looking to enter the military or politics. Unfortunately, there were no local participants for Boys State in 2023.

According to Lloyd MacBride, Halfon's Boys State counterpart, several sports camp events coincided with the weeklong event, and "if they miss that camp, they lose their place on the team." Thankfully, Teutsch was able to step up to the plate and represent the area at Girls State.

Teutsch, 16, first heard about the program thanks to her uncle's involvement in Boys State in Louisiana, and she was inspired to give it a shot after talking to her mother and learning more.

"I sparked an interest about a year ago learning about government and political science," Teutsch said. "Even though it was state government, it was still something very important to learn because you need to know all aspects of government."

Initially, Teutsch was overwhelmed by the experience simply due to her unfamiliarity with everything, but over the week, her confidence grew, and she found herself getting more involved with the process, which she came to know as "a really interesting

program." Georgia Girls State is a national program funded by the American Legion Auxiliary that serves to introduce students to American government on three different levels; participants are given opportunities to apply themselves to various roles in city, county and state governance.

Students are put in charge of a fictional 51st state and must set up the three rungs of administration through mock campaigning and rallies, debates, voting and more. The girls are divided into two parties – Federalists and Nationalists – that echo the real world's dual-party system.

Only high school juniors with B-grade averages and higher are eligible to participate, and they must come with a letter of recommendation from the school counselor attesting that they "would be a good person to represent the community."

And these "representatives" come from all walks of life. Not everyone who attends Girls State – or Boys State, for that matter – goes into the military or government. Entrepreneurs, musicians, athletes and others have attended the event in their youth, coming away knowing more about the inner workings of their country.

As for Teutsch, she was a Federalist who first ran for Senator, then Governor, the highest position at Girls State. She admits she didn't expect to make it that far but was pleasantly surprised to find her peers – the 137 other delegates in attendance – judged her better than her own perceptions.

In the words of Halfon, "winging it" is a valuable skill to have, especially as a politician or someone dealing in foreign affairs. Teutsch's unexpected, humble success being elected Governor fed her confidence, and she believes the experience has helped her grow as a person.

"It's OK to have actual conversations, to actually con-

nect with people not through some form of pre-written speech," said Teutsch, with Halfon pointing out that her positive personality certainly contributed to her victory. "Just be in the moment and it'll guide you to where you need to go."

Considering the big impact Girls State had on her, Teutsch delivered a special speech in last week's meeting thanking Halfon and other Auxiliary members for sponsoring her trip and for believing in her capabilities.

At the podium, Teutsch relayed that Girls State helped her learn to work in a group, not to set limits or allow failure to shape her future, and to exhibit more confidence in her own abilities.

Overall, Teutsch believes the program allows budding world-shakers the chance to "not only learn about how our state runs, but also build leadership skills and connect with people from all over the state of Georgia who have similar interests as you."

"It's really a shame that it's not offered to ... every city and every town and every suburb," said MacBride regarding the program, noting that the "hands-on" approach to the exercise gives students a way to experience both governance and what they're considering for their futures.

"Go for the big dream; don't settle for the little job when you could have the big job," Halfon said. "Boys have not necessarily had to have those kinds of pep talks over the years."

"It's more about letting these girls know, 'Don't take no for an answer. Go for your dream, whatever that is.' All the doors are open to the young ladies nowadays."

And with a new experience under her belt, Girls State Governor Juliette Teutsch has opened yet another door for her own future, along with those of Towns County, neighboring Rabun County, and Georgia at large.

Mountain Beautification and Revitalization Association



Towns County Band Director Tim Skinner standing between the new carts with four of his band members

Jeff King, Krista Massell and Gordy Jones, volunteers for Mountain Beautification & Revitalization Assoc., worked with members of the Enotah Garden Club on July 21, 2023 in the flower bed in front of the Young Harris Post Office that the Garden Club maintains. A few landscape timbers needed to be replaced and secured with rebar to outline the flower bed for many more years. Many thanks to all these community-minded volunteers.

Also, at Young Harris City Hall, the mail drop box wasn't big enough to hold all the mail on most weekends. Residents who pay their water bills through this slot were afraid their payments would be stolen. MBRA volunteers Jesse Cook and Andrew Johnson, spent several hours to enlarge the box, so that those fears could be alleviated.

At Towns County

Schools there is a new Band Director, Tim Skinner, who wanted new carts to transport the band members, instruments and equipment onto the football field. MBRA President Gordy Jones, who owns a welding machine, has been helping in the welding class at school for several months. He and a band member's dad who works for Interstate Steel & Welding got together for a number of eve-

nings, working on this project. This not only saved the school a lot of money with no labor cost, but now allows the band to streamline their setup at this season's Indians' football halftime shows.

Community projects are always looking for volunteers. If you'd like to join this volunteer organization email Gordy Jones at mbra8054@gmail.com.

Purple Heart Day ensures courage never forgotten

This past Monday, Aug. 7, was Purple Heart Day, the day when we remember our service members who were wounded in combat or paid the ultimate price by giving their lives. Today, an estimated 600,000 Purple Heart recipients are still with us. They're living quietly with their memories – and their wounds. Beyond the loss of limbs, beyond the traumatic brain injuries, many have psychological wounds that can linger.

Purple Heart Day is the kind of day created to give back. It's a day for Americans to remember and honor the men and women who bravely represented their country and were wounded or killed whilst serving. These people are decorated with a Purple Heart in the name of the President, and this day is for remembering them and their sacrifice.

Some states, counties, and cities pause in recognition, as do some sports and entertainment entities. Military and veteran organizations also hold meetings for remembrance.

History Of Purple Heart Day: The original Purple Heart, designated as a Badge of Merit, was awarded by George Washington in 1782. There was a lack of funds in the Continental Army at the time so the award was a way to honor enlisted and deserving people.

The honor is presented to soldiers for "any singularly meritorious action." It was designed with a piece of silk bound through it with a thin edge of silver. Washington only gave out three of the badges himself, and instead authorized subordinates to issue the badges as they saw fit.

The Badge of Merit faded from use but was revived and relaunched in 1932, this time as the Purple Heart.

As well as honoring those wounded in combat, this iteration of the Purple Heart recognized commendable action. It was in 1944 that the policy was tweaked slightly and the Purple Heart was given the purpose we know it for today, specifically to honor those who have been wounded or died.

The first service member to be given the modern Purple Heart was General Douglas MacArthur for his service in the Pacific theater during World War II. In total there have been 1.8 million Purple Hearts awarded over the years.

Purple Heart Day was first observed in 2014 and has been observed every year since. It's a chance to reflect on the bravery of those who have fought for the U.S. and to ensure that their courage is never forgotten.

By Ron Hill, Blue Ridge Mountain Chapter, Georgia Society, Sons of the American Revolution

August 11 (8/11) Serves as a Convenient Reminder for GA Residents to Always Contact 811 Before Digging



August 11 is almost here, and Georgia 811 hopes that the 8/11 date on the calendar will serve as a natural reminder for residents to contact Georgia 811 prior to any digging project. Contacting 811 before digging is the first step in any digging project, whether it be large or small. Georgia residents can contact 811 at www.Georgia811.com or via the three-digit 811 phone number to have underground public utility lines marked.

When contacting 811, homeowners and contractors are connected to Georgia 811, the local 811 center, which notifies the appropriate utility companies of their intent to dig. Professional locators then arrive at the digging site to mark the approximate locations of underground lines with flags, spray paint or both. Contacting 811 before digging can help avoid injury, repair costs, inconvenient outages, and costly fines.

"On August 11 and throughout the year, we remind homeowners and professional contractors alike to use the free 811 service before digging to reduce the risk of striking an underground utility line," said Georgia 811 President and CEO Meghan Wade. "Calling 811 or visiting Georgia811.com is really the only way to know which public utilities are buried in your area so that you can dig

safely."

Georgia 811 is spreading the 811 message to professional excavators and utility owners/operators by announcing Georgia 811 Damage Prevention Summits which will be held on Thursday, September 14, at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College's Museum of Agriculture in Tifton, and on Thursday, October 5, the Gas South District Event Center in Duluth. Registration is free of charge, and the Summit will include trainings on a variety of safe digging topics. "We are thrilled to once again present an opportunity for networking and damage prevention education as we expand the Summits to include a second location in

South Georgia. We hope many will participate as we work to keep Georgia safe and connected", said Megan Estes, Director of Communications for Georgia 811.

To celebrate 811 Day, Georgia 811 is also running a Facebook contest throughout the month of August in which five winners will each be awarded a \$100 Home Depot gift card. Those interested in participating can find the registration link by following 'Georgia 811' on Facebook and clicking the link on the top pinned post.

Visit www.Georgia811.com for Summit registration information and to learn more about Georgia 811 and safe digging practices.

Love Light Scholarship Donations

The Chatuge Regional Hospital and Nursing Home Auxiliary is requesting donations to fund our Love Light Scholarship Program. While we accept donations in memory or honor of individuals throughout the year, this is the time when we receive the most donations. The scholarships are awarded to deserving

Towns County High School Seniors who will be entering the medical field. We also award to Chatuge Hospital/Nursing Home employees working to further their education.

Please return this form with your donation to: Love Light Scholarship, P O Box 986, Hiawassee, GA 30546.

Name: _____
 Address: _____

 Given in MEMORY of: _____
 Given in HONOR of: _____
 Acknowledgement to be sent to:
 Name: _____
 Address: _____

Back to School...from Page 1A



A Towns County Elementary School student excitedly hopping out of her family car for the first day back Aug. 4.
Photo by Lowell Nicholson

looks forward to “just learning new people, new culture,” and that he plans on making a difference in wanting to help the community, especially after receiving such a warm welcome.

“Being in the Metro area, life is such a hustle and bustle,” he said. “I mean, it’s just go, go, go. And these guys up here, especially with the football players, they’re like, ‘Coach, what do you think about it, man?’ It’s just laid back, and I’m like, ‘This is awesome. This is

great.’”

Adriann Lashomb has three children at Towns County Schools and says they all “love it” and she’s “never had any issues.” Admittedly, she enjoyed sleeping in over the summer, but knowing that her kids love going to school is enough to get her out of bed early in the morning.

“They enjoy being back in a routine,” said Lashomb, who has worked at the school as a special education parapro-

fessional for three years now.

“My daughter loves to read, but she also really likes math,” Lashomb said of her 13-year-old. As for her much younger son, who was playing with a buddy, his favorite part of kindergarten so far has been the playground.

There’s no telling what the rest of Towns County’s children will most look forward to this year, but one thing is sure – they’ll be learning a lot along the way.



On Friday, School Resource Officer Donnie Jarrard was thrilled to be welcoming students back to another year of learning after a long summer break.
Photo by Lowell Nicholson