

Towns County Herald

Legal Organ of Towns County

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50 Cents

Publication Number 635540 Volume 89 Number 41

Wednesday, August 15, 2018

Indians head back to school on August 16

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

Summer break officially ends for students this week, as classes resume at Towns County Schools on Thursday, Aug. 16.

Open House for students occurred on Tuesday, Aug. 14, for students to meet their teachers, find their classrooms, and grab their schedules ahead of the first day back.

"We've spent all summer doing renovations on the middle/high school," said Superintendent Dr. Darren Berrong. "All that was completed about two weeks ago, so right now, we're ready for school to start."

"The teachers have been getting the final touches put on their classrooms, so it should be business as usual the first day of school."

Most of the renovations

to the 40-year-old building occurred in out-of-sight areas of the school, such as the complete roof replacement and HVAC overhaul with all new ductwork and units.

"There's not a whole lot of difference inside the buildings," said Dr. Berrong. "The ceiling tiles are different, so you can kind of see that. There's a little bit of a new smell in the building. So, hopefully, everybody will see the work that was done and feel like it was beneficial."

Concerning the HVAC, the school went from several large units serving the entire building to several dozen small units serving individual classrooms, along with a new fresh air recycling unit.

"Now, if a unit goes down, it will literally only go down for one classroom," said Dr. Berrong. "Whereas before, if a unit went down,

the entire hallway was out of heat or air, depending on what time of year it was. So, there are significant differences.

"Without a doubt, it's going to be more energy efficient. It's newer technology, and everything we did was energy efficient, trying to cut back on our energy costs at the school."

Phase two of the renovations are still on track to be completed next summer, including rewiring, replacement of the fire alarm system, new doors and flooring, repainting and other minor projects around the schools.

"There's so much technology in schools now, and 40 years ago, the breaker systems and all the outlets - we don't have near as many outlets as we need at this point," said Dr. Berrong. "When you have a classroom full of 30 computers, See School, Page 6A



Stephanie Moss, Myra Underwood, Diane Adams and Darren Berrong of the Towns County Board of Education Office. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

City of Hiwassee opens account to draw down on GEFA loan

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

The big business in the Aug. 7 regular meeting of the Hiwassee City Council and Mayor Liz Ordiales concerned the opening of a new bank account.

This new bank account will be dedicated to the use of incoming loan funds to upgrade the city's wastewater treatment facility.

In May, the Georgia Environmental Finance Authority, or GEFA, notified the city that it had been awarded an \$800,000 Clean Water State Revolving Loan.

Thanks to the impending Magnolia Senior Living development near the junction, the city needed to secure the loan by proving that it needed to expand its sewer capacity based on growth in the area.

Securing the GEFA loan directly resulted in the city also receiving a \$600,000 grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission.

All told, the \$1.2 million



Liz Ordiales

in loan/grant funds will go toward much-needed upgrades at the sewer plant.

To receive the GEFA funds, however, the city needed to open a bank account, and the council voted to do so in the Aug. 7 meeting.

Authorized signers on the new account are Mayor Ordiales, City Clerk Bonnie Kendrick and Police Chief

Paul Smith.

The GEFA loan of \$800,000 has an interest rate of 1.63 percent over a 15-year term, and the loan will be used to finance sewer equipment upgrades and to expand the treatment capacity of the plant to 500,000 gallons per day, up from its current 300,000 gallons per day capacity.

Already, the design phase for the sewer upgrades has been completed, and the city is shooting for an early 2019 project completion date.

"All the work that has been done so far has been professional designs, blueprints, that kind of stuff," said Ordiales. "We've been paying it from our sewer operating fund, so when we get that money in, we can transfer that money back to the operating fund for the sewer plant."

"It's fairly substantial. It's going to be probably a total of about \$120,000 when it's all said and done. It's all professional services - engineering, design, bidding, See Hiwassee, Page 6A

TVA President Bill Johnson to attend EMC annual meeting



BRMEMC Directors Danny Henson, Ray Cook and Mickey Cummings in the Aug. 7 Town Hall Meeting. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

YOUNG HARRIS - Tennessee Valley Authority President and CEO Bill Johnson will be attending the Sept. 8 annual meeting of the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC.

BRMEMC Board President Mickey Cummings made the announcement at the Aug. 7 Town Hall Meeting at EMC headquarters in Young Harris.

The town hall served as a springboard for discussion with the two dozen or so EMC members who showed up for the event.

Topics covered that evening included ongoing concerns regarding annual TVA rate amendments, a potential TVA amendment limiting director voting to member districts, the EMC's plans for broadband expansion and more.

The announcement that Johnson is coming to the annual meeting is big news

for the EMC, as it shows that BRMEMC General Manager Jeremy Nelms and the EMC Board of Directors have been successful in catching TVA's attention.

In the town hall, Cummings read from a letter drafted by the board and management to Johnson, highlighting the various concerns of the EMC and its membership.

"The primary concern we consistently hear from See TVA, Page 6A

Rosser talks Family Connection with Movers and Shakers

By Mark Smith
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Towns County native Amy Gibby Rosser is the executive director of Towns County Family Connection, and she spoke with the Mountain Movers and Shakers at the Sundance Grill on Friday, Aug. 10.

Rosser's educational background is in social work, and she's been with Towns County Family Connection since its local inception 19 years ago.

The program is one in a long list of legacies of former U.S. Senator and Gov. Zell Miller, a native son who passed away earlier this year. Thanks to his efforts as a lawmaker, every county in the state has a Family Connection office, said Rosser.

Family Connection is "the largest statewide network of communities in the nation



Amy Rosser with Towns County Family Connection spoke with the Mountain Movers and Shakers on Aug. 10. Photo by Mark Smith

that have made a commitment to improve results for children and families," according to Towns.GAFCP.org.

The main goal of Towns County Family Connection, said Rosser, centers around finding relief in situations involving the potential for child abuse and neglect.

"In Towns County, our child abuse and neglect rank of substantiated cases is above the State of Georgia average," said Rosser. "We are significantly above the State of Georgia average."

Substantiated means that investigators have been sent out and have observed and confirmed the cases, though not all cases are substantiated.

"What about those kids that they went in and investigated, and they just didn't find quite enough to confirm?" said Rosser. "That's the families that we work with, that we're concerned with."

Rosser said another major goal of Family Connection is See Rosser, Page 6A

Sally Tanner to serve as new School Resource Officer at schools

By Mark Smith
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

The Towns County School System is bringing aboard a second school resource officer, just in time for the start of the 2018-2019 school year on Aug. 16.

In the Aug. 13 regular monthly meeting of the Towns County Board of Education, which occurred after press time, the school board was expected to hire Sally Tanner as the system's new SRO.

Tanner served as an SRO at Union County Schools before Sheriff Chris Clinton hired her in 2017 to work for the Towns County Sheriff's Office.

The decision to hire a second SRO has been boards unanimously approving the added security measure in a July 19 called meeting.

According to Superintendent Dr. Darren Berrong, as an SRO, Tanner's salary will be split 75/25 between the school system and the county, as she will be spending most of her time with the school system but will patrol the county during summer break.

Early cost estimates for adding a new SRO were about \$35,000 for the school system, according to Berrong, which would mean the county would be on the hook for an additional \$12,000 or so.

Tanner will be serving



Dr. Darren Berrong

inside the Towns County Elementary School to supplement the capabilities of longtime SRO Donnie Jarrard, who will primarily patrol the middle/high school building.

"So, we'll have one SRO in both buildings," said Berrong on July 19. "That would ... give us a little bit more freedom when Donnie's going on field trips or baseball trips, then we would still have someone on campus."

In other school board news, Dr. Berrong said during the Aug. 6 board work session that the system had been awarded approximately \$77,000 from the state for a new school bus.

Every so often, depending on the size of the school, the state will award such funds for a new school bus, said Dr. Berrong, and Towns County needs a

mid-size bus that will cost approximately \$97,000.

The board office is hopeful that the new bus will be ready to start its route before Christmas this year.

Also in the Aug. 6 work session, the board discussed the 21st Century After-School Program, which will soon be receiving its yearly grant funding worth approximately \$300,000.

The grant money comes from the 21st Century Community Learning Centers, a federal program authorized by the Every Student Succeeds Act.

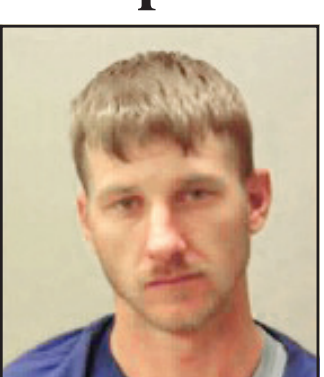
This grant lasts five years, during which a whole new grant has to be applied for, and this school year marks the fifth and final year under the current grant.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, the program "supports the creation of community learning centers that provide academic enrichment opportunities during non-school hours for children."

"The program helps students meet state and local student standards in core academic subjects, such as reading and math, (and) offers students a broad array of enrichment activities that can complement their regular academic programs."

These grants were up for approval in the Aug. 13 regular board meeting.

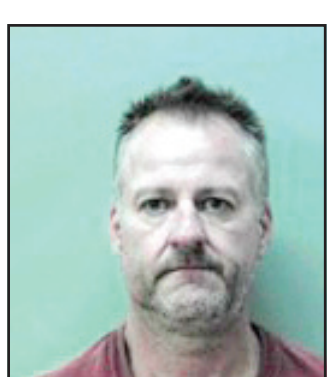
TCSO arrests three on separate charges last week



Aaron Patterson



Carey Kendall



Jeff Arrowood

See TCSO, Page 6A

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Lake Levels

Blue Ridge 1,685.03

Chatuge 1,924.55

Nottely 1,775.69

Barcode



FOOTBALL

Fri. Aug 17

@ Hayesville, NC 7:30

SOFTBALL

Wed. Aug 15 vs Union 4:30

Hiwassee River

Watershed Coalition

Nature Walk

Series

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FREE FOOD

DISTRIBUTION

THURS. AUGUST 16TH

10-NOON

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Walk and Talk

Program

Brasstown Bald

Sat. Aug. 18th

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