

# Towns County Herald

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Wednesday, August 23, 2023

## Parade a huge success; Fair concludes on Saturday

By Natalie Mintz  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

The Georgia Mountain Fair continues its 72nd annual outing this week before wrapping up on Saturday, Aug. 26, with a hard ticket concert by Casting Crowns.

Until then, people will find that there's more to see and do than ever, including arts and crafts, history exhibits, the Pioneer Village, a carnival, musical performances located throughout the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds, and plenty of food trucks to choose from.

The nine-day annual tradition got its start on Friday, Aug. 18, holding its unofficial kick-off with the ever-popular Georgia Mountain Fair Parade on Saturday, Aug. 19, through Hiawassee.

"Stars, Stripes, and Summer Nights" served as the theme

for the 2023 parade, which featured District 50 State Sen. Bo Hatchett as Grand Marshal.

Towns County Sheriff Ken Henderson led the parade, followed by Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw with Sen. Hatchett in tow, and Hiawassee Mayor Liz Ordiales.

"We want to thank everybody that has come out to the parade. It brings everybody together; we all look forward to it," Henderson said, noting that he was honored to have the opportunity to lead the procession.

Towns County Fire Rescue and Towns EMS rode in the parade as well, joining with the many floats decorated by local organizations, schools, businesses and churches throwing candy out to attendees lining each side of Main Street on the way to the Fairgrounds.

The high school bands of Towns and Union County

performed for the masses, and Indians cheerleaders made a spirited display for the hometown crowd.

Caroline Roberts, the winner of Thursday night's Miss Georgia Mountain Fair Pageant, made for an excellent addition to the parade as ambassador for the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds, complete with other winners riding aboard the Lions Club float.

Members of The Blairsville Cruisers, Peach State Challengers, and the Atlanta Chapter of the Model A Club brought vintage cars to drive in the parade, with well-behaved horses provided by local farms rounding out the procession.

As always, the floats designed for the parade did not disappoint, with some tough choices having to be made to decide the winners of the float



State Sen. Bo Hatchett, GMF Parade Grand Marshal, being driven by Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw on Saturday. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

## Roberts of Rabun crowned Miss GA Mountain Fair

By Brittany Holbrooks  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

The coronation of a new queen took place in Anderson Music Hall the evening of Thursday, Aug. 17, as 2022 Miss Georgia Mountain Fair Sarah Shook handed over her crown to the new 2023 Miss Georgia Mountain Fair, Caroline Roberts of Rabun County.

Queen Roberts competed against 10 other girls in the regional Miss Georgia Mountain Fair Pageant, taking part in a night filled with various stages of friendly competition.

From Fair questionnaires to daring displays of fashion, the young ladies won the hearts of the audience – and judges – between humorous quips of the hosts and dance breaks by skilled Hayesville, North Carolina.



2023 Miss Georgia Mountain Fair Caroline Roberts receiving her crown from Towns County's own Sarah Shook, who "passed the torch" Aug. 17 after earning the crown herself in 2022. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

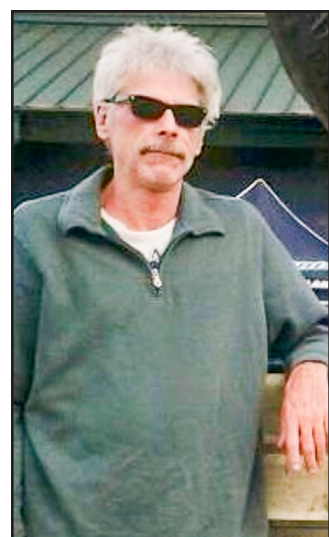
## Dacula man, 64, dies in crash on Uniocoi Mountain

By Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
Editor

A 64-year-old Dacula man died in a one-vehicle crash on Uniocoi Mountain Sunday, Aug. 13, marking the third vehicle-related death in this area of the county since July 7.

Georgia State Patrol responded to the scene on Georgia 17 near Indian Grave Gap that Sunday evening, where the driver's Nissan NV200 van had been negotiating a curve to the right before traveling off the left side of the roadway, "striking a tree with its front."

George Croly, the driver, was pronounced dead at the scene by Towns County Deputy Coroner Ken Nicholson, and the dog traveling with Croly also died in the accident. It was not known at press time what Croly was doing in the area.



George Croly

The crash is still under investigation, so contributing factors were not immediately available, but according to au-

thorities, there were no skid marks in the roadway indicating an attempt to slow down or stop.

This was the third death on the Uniocoi Turnpike since last month, and all three were non-residents, highlighting the prevalence of out-of-towners traveling to and through the area.

On July 7, Mark Savage, 63, of Watkinsville, was driving home from a family trip celebrating his grandchild's birthday when a dump truck blew a tire near Walls Mountain Road on Georgia 17 and knocked his vehicle off the road, killing him and injuring members of his family.

Then on July 21, the Towns County Sheriff's Office discovered the body of a motorcyclist who had been missing

## Sheriff Henderson talks drugs, feud with Hiawassee Police

By Brittany Holbrooks  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

The Mountain Movers & Shakers welcomed Towns County Sheriff Ken Henderson and Young Harris College Police Chief Robbie Rich on Aug. 18, with topics ranging from local drug enforcement to the ongoing jurisdictional dispute between TCSO and Hiawassee Police.

"I am so pleased as to where we are," Henderson began, describing how his three years so far in office have resulted in several important goals being met, from the addition of a K-9 Unit to new uniforms and vehicles along with upgraded equipment and State Certification.

Henderson said one of his biggest goals has been to tackle the drug problem facing the county, and he recounted that in his first year in 2021, TCSO made 85 drug busts, including shutting down some ties to cartels.

2022 saw an impressive increase to a total of 105 drug busts that year. And while there had only been 39 busts in 2023 as of that Friday's meeting, Henderson expressed "no doubt" that before the year is through, the county will exceed last year's statistic.

"We've got to be vigilant with this. We've got to work hard. We've got to work together (with) everybody helping our law enforcement to be able to get information to go



Sheriff Ken Henderson and YHC Police Chief Robbie Rich spoke about their respective agencies with the Movers & Shakers on Friday. Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

after these people and stop it. I think we all want to be able to keep it away from our kids," Henderson said, adding that it only took one hit of fentanyl to cause addiction or death.

After voicing his pride in the Towns County Sheriff's Office, Henderson emphasized the department's value for transparency. With that came the reveal of "the biggest problem" law enforcement agencies encounter in the current age: hiring – and keeping – personnel.

In an effort to fill positions and keep the proverbial ball rolling, Henderson has taken staff from the jail to help cover the lack of deputies. Even

still, the sheriff has put out ads to try and draw fresh interest in the department.

It was the next topic that seemed to be of particular interest to the audience, as Henderson said, "Obviously, everyone's aware of the city situation. We had some differences, OK?"

The reference was to a June 2022 roadside confrontation between Henderson and a Hiawassee Police Officer that went internationally viral after the release of body cam footage from the incident. The heated disagreement appeared to stem from a jurisdictional dispute.

"My door's open; I want

## Drunk driver arrested after fleeing multiple area agencies

By Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
Editor

Three law enforcement agencies collaborated last week to arrest a Hayesville, North Carolina, man who was driving recklessly in Union and Towns counties, resulting in more than a dozen charges, including driving under the influence and fleeing officers.

The incident began the afternoon of Tuesday, Aug. 15, when Union County Sheriff's Lt. Leon James, a dedicated traffic enforcement officer,

spotted a motorist traveling westbound "at a high rate of speed" on US 76 near Berry Road, according to UCSC Capt. Daren "Bear" Osborn.

Lt. James, who had been driving east at the time, used his radar unit to clock the truck going about 20 mph over the posted 55-mph speed limit, Osborn said.

The lieutenant turned around to make the stop, catching up with the truck near St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church. He activated his lights



Severo Escorza Tapia

See Tapia Arrested, Page 2A

## BRMEMC announces new rate increase for all members

By L. Allan Glidewell  
Blue Ridge Mountain EMC  
General Manager

I am writing to inform the membership that Blue Ridge Mountain Electric Membership Corporation will have to raise its portion of the electric rates by 2.25%. This increase is the first in 10 years and will go into effect on Oct. 1.

Over those 10 years we have been able to manage our way through and absorb normal inflation, largely on the strength of growth, but post-COVID inflation rates have been much higher and have proven a different matter.

BRMEMC continues to experience an enviable growth rate of nearly 1,200 meters per

year. The growth accelerated during the COVID pandemic, as many spent much more time in their second homes in the area.

But the negatives include difficult material supply chain issues resulting in 50%-60% cost increases on some items needed to build and maintain the system. These issues are not unique to us or even the electric industry. Anyone buying eggs, butter and milk has felt the results of these issues.

Our increase will represent only a 2.25% increase (well below what we are seeing in our household staples). This increase will be spread evenly across all rate classes but will be applied in different methods.



Allan Glidewell  
EMC General Manager

Residential rates will be increased by raising the customer charge \$2.90/month from \$22.91 to \$25.81. This See EMC Rate Increase, Page 5A

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Lake Levels

Blue Ridge 1,683.17  
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Nottely 1,773.31

FOOTBALL  
8/25 7:30 PM  
@ LOA

Qualifying Ends on Aug. 23 See page 2A

TCFR Seeking Volunteers See page 3A

Summer Heat Safety Tips See page 6B



The support you need for your next big dream.  
Talk to us today about your loan and line of credit options.



Tina Denton | 706-435-1104  
Hiawassee Main Office  
NMLS# 744611

Matt Miller | 706-435-1106  
Hiawassee Main Office  
NMLS# 744609

# Tapia Arrested...from Page 1A

and siren, and the driver eventually stopped next to a cornfield on 76, Osborn said.

James called the stop in to 911 Dispatch, and as he got out of his patrol car to approach the truck, the driver took off heading west again, Osborn said.

A chase ensued, with James notifying dispatch that the suspect was running from the law. The driver turned into the east entrance of Mountain Building Supply, again "at a high rate of speed," nearly striking a person walking across the parking lot, Osborn said.



According to authorities, Tapia bush-bonded after running his truck off the road in Young Harris last week.

Photo/Facebook

"He then drove out of the second entrance of Mountain Building Supply heading back east," Osborn said. "He didn't yield, stop or anything, but pulled out into oncoming traffic, about causing another collision."

James proceeded with caution, Osborn said, yielding to traffic with his emergency equipment engaged. Unfortunately, the lieutenant was unable to catch up to the truck that was now heading eastbound at over 100 mph toward Towns County, passing cars on the wrong side of the road.

"It was basically a safety issue at that point, and Leon killed his equipment and stopped the chase," Osborn said.

In the meantime, Union County E-911 had informed Towns County Dispatch of the situation, and Georgia State Patrol picked up the chase across the county line, with the driver continuing to show "no regard for the motoring public as he traveled at excessive speeds," per GSP.

As the driver was turning right from Townsend Mill Road onto Byers Creek Road, the pursuing trooper attempted a "Precision Immobilization Technique" but was unable to stop the truck, according to GSP.

The driver kept going toward Georgia 66 and wrecked his truck off the side of the road at the intersection of Byers Creek Road and Red Farm Road in Young Harris, and he

ran from the scene on foot, the Towns County Sheriff's Office said.

Joining the search to apprehend the subject were deputies from the Towns County Sheriff's Office, the TCSO drone, and the Union County Sheriff's Office tracking K-9.

A Towns County resident saw the man running on his property and notified deputies on the scene as to the direction of travel, and TCSO Capt. Johnny McCoy observed him crossing a field, where he took the suspect into custody without incident, TCSO said.

Severo Escorza Tapia, 51, of Hayesville, was arrested by Georgia State Patrol and charged with driving under the influence of alcohol, aggressive driving, driving on the wrong side of the road, driving without a valid license, failure to drive within a single lane, failure to stop for a stop sign, two counts fleeing or attempting to elude a police officer, no insurance, reckless driving, and speeding.

The Union County Sheriff's Office has charged Tapia with fleeing or attempting to elude a police officer and aggravated assault, with additional charges pending.

Tapia remained at the Towns County Detention Center at press time, where he is subject to a hold for his Union County charges. He is presumed innocent until found guilty in a court of law.

## Food Pantry Food Distribution

The Food Pantry hours are Monday - Thursday 9 AM- 12 PM with the exception of distribution day. The Distribution is every other Wednesday 11 AM - 2 PM.

Any questions or concerns, please contact Richard Thomas at towns.pantry@ndocsbg.org or (706) 896-4783. T(Aug23-A1)JH

# Hiawassee, Young Harris qualifying ends on August 23

By Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
Editor

Qualifying for the Municipal General Elections of Hiawassee and Young Harris began on Monday and will conclude by close of business on Wednesday, Aug. 23.

Three council seats are up for grabs in this year's Hiawassee election coming up on Nov. 7, with those positions currently being held by Council Members Jay Chastain, Nancy Noblet and Anne Mitchell. Their terms expire in December.

To make the ballot, Hiawassee residents will need to fill out the appropriate qualifying paperwork and pay a fee, which is \$72 for a council seat. Qualifying packets can be picked up during regular business hours inside Hiawassee City Hall located at 50 River Street.

People may submit their qualifying paperwork and fee payments at Hiawassee City Hall through Wednesday, Aug. 23, between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 4 p.m., excluding the hour from 1-2 p.m.

In Young Harris, three council seats are up for election also, currently held by Matt Miller, Terry Ingram and Steve Clark. Interested and eligible residents of Young Harris will need to pick up qualifying packets at Young Harris City Hall located at 50 Irene Berry Drive. The fee is \$72.

Completed candidate qualifying paperwork and fee payments may be turned into Young Harris City Hall through 4:30 p.m. on Aug. 23.

A person is eligible to qualify for and hold city office if 21 years or older, a resident of their respective city for at least a year immediately prior to the election date, and a registered and qualified voter in their municipal election.

He or she must also continue to reside in their city during the term of office, with all terms of office beginning Jan. 1, 2024, and running through Dec. 31, 2027.

Early voting will occur on weekdays for three weeks prior to Nov. 7 Election Day, starting Monday, Oct. 16, and ending on Friday, Nov. 3. There will be two days of weekend

early voting on Saturday, Oct. 21, and Saturday, Oct. 27.

In Hiawassee, all in-person voting will take place at the Towns County Board of Elections & Registration Office at 67 Lakeview Circle, Suite A. Young Harris General Election voters will need to vote at Young Harris City Hall.

For both municipal elections, the registration deadline to cast a ballot is Oct. 10, so people who have yet to register should do so at the Towns County Board of Elections & Registration Office in Hiawassee.

Only registered city residents may vote in their respective municipal elections.

The deadline to request absentee ballots is Oct. 27. If requested, absentee ballots will be mailed at the earliest beginning Oct. 16.

In addition to the municipal elections this year, there will be a countywide special election Nov. 7 to decide the Education Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax referendum put on the ballot by the Towns County Board of Education.

## Save our County's History with your Donations

The Towns County Historical Society has been given a wonderful challenge to help restore the 118-year-old Berrong-Oakley House to its original stately condition.

You can be a part of this challenge by donating to the cost of restoration in many different ways.

There will be brick pavers with a name of your choice for \$250; a donor wall, a plaque board, and brick for \$500. You can have a name plaque by a fireplace for \$2,000-\$3,000; restore a hall for \$3,000 and a bedroom for \$2,000, the dining/living room for \$3,000. You can have a plaque above a room entry for \$5,000 or restore the front porch for \$10,000 or the back porch for \$8,000.

The City of Hiawassee will be paying for a new roof for the house and having the chimney capped. The City police found some of the items stolen from the house, mantles, and doors, and they will be replaced.



Berrong-Oakley House

The stately house has an interesting background, having been built by J. Miles Berrong for his wife, Maggie Corn Berrong. The builder was a local man, Bart Lockaby, whose homes always had gables, gingerbread trim, and horseshoes.

Both J. Miles and Maggie Corn were born in Towns County, he in 1860 and she in 1870. In Hearthstones of Home, Historian Jerry Taylor

recounts that J. Miles Berrong was in merchandising and then got into politics. He married Maggie Corn in 1899. She was reported to be the first woman in Towns County to attend college, and as a lifelong teacher, headed the Literacy Campaign in Towns County, also started a Home Economics class, and organized 4-H Clubs in the county public schools.

The Berrong's had 2 infant children and Susie, who married Tom Oakley from Washington DC. The Oakley's had two children, Tom Jr. and Mary Sue, and owned the Berrong House for a number of years. J. Miles and Maggie Berrong are both buried in Osborn Cemetery, he dying in 1939 at the age of 79 and she died in 1961 at the age of 91.

Now your name can also be included in this wonderful old home with a donation to its restoration. Mail your donations to Towns County Historical Society, P.O. Box 1182, Hiawassee GA, 30546.

Look for tours of the house when some of this work is completed. Once the restoration is complete, the historical society will continue managing the home as an event center, that will host small weddings, reunions, and meetings, and a museum to continue to tell the story of the Berrong-Oakley family and their impact on Towns County.

## Towns County Lions Club Host Towns/Union Extension Agent



During the August 8th meeting at Daniel's Restaurant in Hiawassee, the Towns County Lions Club hosted our Towns/Union counties Cooperative Extension Agent, Jacob Williams, who visited with a wide range of information about his office's available services that are connected to county and state agencies extending lifelong learning to Georgia citizens through unbiased, research based educational programs and resources.

As the University of GA. Colleges of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences representative for both counties, Jacob Williams evaluates, plans and promotes community engagement strategies involving educational projects, agricultural research, financial information and governmental programs progress.

His office is located in the Towns County Civic Center near the Hiawassee Courthouse and the Public Library. Please contact the Facebook page for phone number and



Jacob Williams

hours of operation.

GA Mountain Fair Supervisors Jeff Myers (Funnel Cake Kitchen), Julie Payne (Gates), Janie McConnell (Autographed Guitar Raffle), Jim McConnell (Music Hall Ushers), and Allen Saylor (Trolley Drivers) urged all Lions to volunteer for as many shifts as possible during the Fair. Many thanks in advance to all the volunteers! This 72nd edition of the World Famous Pride of the Peach State GA Mtn. Fair promises to be the best one yet! See y'all at The Fair!

## TC Democrats offered info to YHC students at Community Resources Fair



(L-R): Vickie Plunkett, Suzanne Carter, John Bennett, and county chair Charlotte Sleczkowski (seated)

Voter registration was the goal when Towns County Democrats, Vickie Plunkett, Suzanne Carter, John Bennett, and county chair Charlotte Sleczkowski, participated in the Community Resources Fair on Thursday at Young Harris College.

The fair offered incoming Young Harris College students information on local organizations, health services, businesses, and churches. Many Young Harris College freshmen who turned 18 before entering college registered to vote for the first time.

## VFW Fish Fry

The VFW is pleased to have you come and have Fish Fry with us at our post on Sunny Side for \$12 or \$15 all you can eat.

The nights of the fish fry is still the second (2nd) and the fourth (4th) Fridays of each month Remember no tax and no tip. We hope to see you there.

## VFW Bingo

The VFW Post 7807 in Hiawassee has Bingo every Sunday afternoon at 2:30 PM. Doors open at 1:30 PM.

We are located on Highway 288, Sunnyside Road, Hiawassee, Ga. Food and drinks will be available. Come join us and have fun! Starting January 16. For more info call 706-896-8387. NT(Aug23-A1)JH

## Local Al-Anon meetings

Are you troubled by someone's drinking? Al-Anon Family Groups (for friends and family) meet every Tuesday at 12 noon at St. Francis of Assisi, 3717 Hwy. 515, GA. For details call 404-687-0467 or visit aa.org NT(Aug23-Z1)CA

# Fatal Crash...from Page 1A

for two days. Michael Brock, 53, of Homer, suffered fatal injuries after his motorcycle went over an embankment near the top of Unicoi Mountain on July 19.

County Coroner Tamela Cooper said that, while the trio of deaths can't necessarily be connected to a single issue such as speed, she generally advises motorists to slow down and pay more attention to everything in the roadway, as accidents seem to be up countywide.

Towns County has seen a dramatic increase in traffic over the last few years, as pandemic-era relocations have resulted in a growing population in the North Georgia Mountains, and tourism to the area has been increasing, too.

As a result, the chances for motor vehicle accidents have increased as well, with a corresponding greater risk of death on local roads. Importantly, motorists can exercise due diligence to make

themselves safer even when the actions of other drivers are unpredictable.

"People need to slow down," Cooper said. "In my opinion, most of the fatal accidents we've seen recently have been caused by either traveling too fast or traveling too fast for conditions."

"And I'd really like the Department of Transportation to put more guardrails and signage on Unicoi Mountain."

Cooper said that residents slowing down, being aware of their surroundings, and not getting distracted while driving will be even more crucial in the coming months as leaf-looker season approaches in October.

"It's crazy how much traffic has picked up," Cooper said, "and people need to be careful."

Fire Chief Harold Copeland, who also serves the county as deputy coroner, concurred with Cooper on the necessity for people to slow down

and pay attention in the driver's seat, because "speed kills."

"In the last few years, there's a lot of people coming to our area, and you can't blame them," Copeland said. "We've got the best of everything up here; we've got the cooler evenings, the beautiful scenery, the great, beautiful Lake Chatuge. You can't blame folks for coming."

Traffic issues have been compounded by larger numbers of people with high-performance vehicles like sports cars and "crotch rockets" cruising the mountains, taking advantage of the unique topography here that impacts every driver.

"Anything out of the norm with speed or being distracted with your phone or looking at your pet - anything like that - we've got curves and hills here, and it's definitely different road patterns that we have to contend with compared with other areas," Copeland said.

# EMC Rate Increase...from Page 1A

margin on kWh sales will not be increased. This method was chosen for fairness to large and small users (a seldom-used vacation property bears the increase equally with a heavily used residence). This method provides predictability both for the member and the cooperative.

GSA1 - Commercial and Industrial accounts (those with maximum demands below 50 kW) will be increased by raising the customer charge \$2.70/month from \$23.64 to \$26.34. The margin on kWh sales will not be increased. This method was chosen for the same reasons given in residential class.

GSA2 - Commercial and Industrial accounts (those with maximum demands over 50 kW but less than 1,000 kW) will be increased by raising the margin on kWh sales by 0.314¢ per kWh. The customer charge on these customers will not be increased.

GSA3 - Commercial and Industrial accounts (those with maximum demands over 1,000 kW) will be increased by raising the margin on kWh sales by 0.264¢ per kWh. The customer charge on these customers will not be increased.

Outdoor Lighting will be increased by raising the margin on kWh sales by 0.178¢ per kWh. The custom-

er charge on these customers will not be increased.

Again, all these methods are calculated to provide a 2.25% increase in revenue from each class.

I realize this news may not fit exactly with all our announcements of grants won to expand broadband service to select areas. In truth, we have recently won three fiber grants that will cover projects costing \$16.3 million. The rest of the truth is those funds and efforts are separate from electric revenues.

Even on the fiber side, we will have to pay that entire sum as we build. Upon completion of work, we will be reimbursed 0.70¢ for each dollar spent. In essence, these grants mean we will spend nearly \$4.9 million in these areas. Nonetheless, these grants are a blessing as they will help to bring this service more quickly to our members.

I wish I could tell you this is all the news, but TVA, due to similar issues, has announced an end to its Pandemic Relief Credit which we have passed on to the members each of the past three years. In all fairness, the pandemic is generally acclaimed finished though its effects are still evident.

Regardless, this credit

had the effect of reducing TVA's portion of your bill by roughly 1.5%. In residential bill terms, the removal of this credit will result in an increase of \$1.50 per month for each \$100 spent. On the average bill, which is roughly \$127/month, this will increase that bill by approximately \$1.90.

Altogether, the total effect of these changes should be around \$4.90 per month for the average residential member, or an increase of around 3.8% on that average bill, and will commence on Oct. 1.

I'm not sure what the coming years hold, but it seems clear to me the new investment in the electric system, both TVA's and ours, will increase considerably as old non-electric loads are shifted to electricity and electric vehicles become standard. This past Christmas has surely proven that.

Yet as we are given grace, we will continue to manage these changes with such wisdom as is granted, and with the clear understanding that we as members own these opportunities and share these burdens.

Thank you all so much for the support you have shown and continue to show! And thank you for the opportunity to serve!

# Butternut Creek Festival wins a 200 Best Award



High Country Artisans, Inc. coordinators of the Butternut Creek Festival, is delighted to announce Sunshine Artist magazine has released its 2023 200 Best, ranking the most profitable art and craft festivals in the country based on artists' reported sales in 2022.

The Butternut Creek Festival was ranked No. 60 in the Classic & Contemporary Craft Show category.

Launched in 1993, Sunshine Artist's 200 Best is split into two categories: Fine Art

& Design for events that focus on unique, fine-art pieces and Classic & Contemporary Craft for events that focus on traditional or modern craft and production work.

Information about all the shows that made this year's 200 Best list is available in Sunshine Artist's August/September 2023 issue, as well as online at <https://sunshineartist.com/200-best>.

Artists were able to cast their votes from February through April to nominate their highest money-making shows from 2022. The ballot asked artists to list the 10 most profitable art and/or craft shows they exhibited at during the previous year, indicate

their level of gross sales at each event, and note whether they considered themselves fine artists or craftspeople for each event.

The results were tabulated using a weighted scale based on four sales levels to ensure all events competed against each other fairly. Sunshine Artist's 200 Best focuses solely on artists' show revenue, because that is the most objective indicator of a show's future success. Subjective attributes, such as artist treatment, amenities, attendance levels, management, and overall quality, can impact sales but are harder to gauge and therefore have no direct bearing on the rankings. NT(Aug23.Z5)CA

# "Run Katie Run" on the Hiwassee Square, August 26

Run Katie Run is a roots-rock band based in Atlanta that's a combination of Kate's addiction to Dolly Parton, The Chicks, and Grace Potter with a healthy smattering of Corey's Eric Clapton inspired guitar solos, Adam's Shakey Graves influenced picking, Stephen's love for Vulfpeck-esque bass lines, and Ian's energized, Avett-Brothers-like drumming.

In 2021, they released their first E.P., "Running on Love", - with reviews and previews running in Glide, American Songwriter, and Vents Magazines- they played all over the metro-Atlanta area-including venues like Matilda's and Pigs and Peaches Festival- they were the featured band at Dollywood's Harvest Festival and they're Christmas song, "Fa La La 'ing In Love", was the featured single on Rock by the Sea's annual compilation Christmas album. This year the group has been working on their first full-length album and playing as



Run Katie Run

that the most important part of making music is to do it with people you love, respect, and who have the same motivations as you. I love this band because we're friends first and a band second. We love getting together, we love making music, and we all want to keep getting better; as people and musicians. I think our songs and shows capture the adoration we have for music and for each other." -Kate Coleman.

Great family fun! Bring a blanket or chair. Pricing free/donations accepted. Special thanks to you, our corporate sponsors, and the City of Hiwassee who keep our concerts going! Come early, 6 PM, VFW Auxiliary Food Truck, Sister's Specialty Desserts and maybe a few surprises. This year's rain venue is the Civic Center behind the library. Well behaved pets are welcome (with cleanup)! TI(Aug23.M2)JH

# Misty Mountain Quilters Getting Ready for QuiltFest 2023

By Kathleen Traylor

Blairsville's first quilt show since 2019 is coming soon: Friday and Saturday, September 22-23, 9 AM - 5 PM each day, at the Union County Sports Center on the Glenn Gooch Bypass. There will be over 200 locally-made quilts to see, as well as quilt-related and other craft vendors. Guild members have also been busy creating things to sell in their boutique, ranging from large quilts to small sewn items. The Guild also has a beautiful, queen-bed sized quilt to raffle off, and more than twenty raffle baskets, with items for quilters and non-quilters, including donations from many local merchants.

This show is the Misty Mountain Quilters Guild's major fundraiser for the year, enabling the quilters to purchase supplies for their many charity projects, and to bring in nationally-known speakers and teachers to Guild meetings.

Most of the quilts you will see have been submitted for professional judging, and winners will be selected in seventeen different categories, ranging from extra-large bed quilts to Innovative Art Quilts. This year's judge is Scott Murkin, MD, a physician from Asheboro, NC who also creates original award-winning quilts with brilliant colors and



Quilts from a past QuiltFest, including some blue ribbon winners

modern designs. Visitors will also be able to vote for their favorite quilts, with ribbons for those winners.

Admission is \$7 per person, cash only, payable at the door. Vendors and the boutique can take credit cards, but

the admissions table will be cash only. Parking is free.

For more information, please visit the Guild's QuiltFest 2023 website at <https://www.mistymountainquiltsguild.org/quiltfest-2023>, or email [mmqinfo@gmail.com](mailto:mmqinfo@gmail.com).

# Community Wildfire Protection Plan reduces risks

A Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) is a written document that is used by a community to prepare for wildfires that will require local resources to protect the community. A CWPP is designed through collaboration between state and local fire agencies, RC&Ds, homeowners, and interested stakeholders. The plan implements the community's values and serves to protect natural and community resources and public safety. Planning also enables communities to address their development patterns in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) and determine how they can reduce their risk through alternative development patterns.

The plan includes prioritized recommendations for the appropriate types and methods of fuel reduction and structure ignitability reduction that will protect the community's essential infrastructure. Specifically, the plan includes community-centered actions that will: Educate citizens on wildfire, and ways to protect lives and property; Support fire rescue and suppression entities; Focus on collaborative decision-making and citizen participation; and develop and implement effective mitigation strategies.

The Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA) provided communities with a tremendous opportunity to influence where and how federal agencies implement fuel reduction projects on federal lands. For more than a decade, Congress has made the protection of communities from wildfire a national priority. Yet, since the establishment of the National Fire Plan (2000) and the Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA 2003) the issues regarding deteriorating health of our forests and the need for greater community protection from wildfire are still prominent.

Fire suppression costs have exceeded \$1 billion in recent fire seasons so communities, interest groups, and land management agencies must continue to express their concerns to Congress regarding mounting risks to life, property, and the environment.

A CWPP is the most effective way to take advantage of this opportunity. Additionally, communities with CWPPs in place will be given priority for funding of hazardous fuels reduction projects carried out under the auspices of the HFRA. Fires are usually costlier to suppress in the WUI, the areas where homes are intermixed with forests and wildlands. Debris burning in the WUI is the most

frequent human cause of wildfires, but these human-caused fires can be prevented and the excessive cost of fire suppression reduced.

The first step in wildfire prevention education is to raise awareness of the responsibilities of living in a fire-prone environment. The CWPP collaborative process is effective in improving coordination and communication between emergency response agencies and the community. The goal of protecting communities and natural resources from wildfire cannot be accomplished by any one person or entity so we must work together to identify and pursue a pathway to success thru collaboration.

Collaboration is simply people working together to address a shared problem that no one of them could effectively resolve alone. Each participant brings to the effort knowledge, skills, ideas, and resources, and these decision-makers need to stay actively engaged throughout the collaborative process, and the other participants need to know what the collaborative group's "decision space" is and how much weight its recommendations will carry with the decision-makers.

The use of a collaborative process is one of the requirements that Congress established for a CWPP. Developing and adopting a CWPP opens the door to significant local community benefits, including being able to: 1) define and set the boundaries of the community's WUI; 2) identify and prioritize areas for hazardous fuel-reduction treatments on USFS lands in the WUI; 3) recommend the types and methods of treatment to be used; and 4) influence how federal funds for projects on non-federal WUI lands may be obtained. Additionally, the



collaboration should stimulate or strengthen local efforts to reduce structural ignitability, enhance emergency management and communication, and foster public education and action to reduce wildfire risk to life and property. Perhaps most importantly, collaborative processes help build trust and good working relationships among the participants.

Effective collaboration ensures that all bases are covered in the planning process, that potential problems or roadblocks are identified and dealt with, and that good use is made of available time and money. Getting and keeping people engaged with the process is important to keep the process moving toward developing the emergency plan.

The local Firewise Citizen's Coalitions that have been developed in our area in recent years are the collaborative group that makes this happen and creates among the members a sense of ownership that takes the process to the people to protect them from wildfire. We are in the process of applying for a Community Wildfire Defense Grant that will pay for writing CWPPs for Towns, Union, Hog Hamock on Sapelo Island and five other at risk communities that need to update a CWPP or create a new one. Once we write a CWPP, then we apply for a grant to pay for the items and practices proposed in the CWPP.

For more information on CWPP contact Frank Riley at [info.ccrd@gmail.com](mailto:info.ccrd@gmail.com). NT(Aug23.Z1)CA

# Come join us at our



# Resource Fair

S.A.F.E. Inc. will be hosting a Community Resource Fair on Friday, August 25th at the Union County Civic Center located at 165 Wellborn Street, Blairsville from 10 AM - 3 PM.

This is a wonderful opportunity for the community to learn about the many avail-

able resources within our local areas. Most resources are offered for either free, or at a reduced rate based on income.

Over 20 local organizations will be represented at this event. For more information, please contact Vicki Franklin at 706-379-1901, or email [vfranklin@safeservices.org](mailto:vfranklin@safeservices.org).

# American Red Cross Volunteers

Make a difference in your community! As a volunteer with the American Red Cross, you can help families recover after a home fire, train individuals in first aid and CPR, support America's military families, or take on any number of other roles that make our communities safer, stronger and more resilient. Get started at <https://www.redcross.org/local/georgia/volunteer.html> or call your NWGA chapter office to ask about volunteer opportunities 844-536-6226. NT(Aug23.Z1)CA

# 2023 Fair Parade...from Page 1A

contest. Winning First Place and \$4,000 in prize money was the Aqua Tiki Stateline Dock float; earning Second Place and \$2,500 were the Towns County Seniors; and finishing Third Place to net \$1,500 in cash were the Towns County High School Future Business Leaders of America.

Following the parade, many people chose to head over to the Fairgrounds to continue the family friendly fun.

Glory Putnam came up from Kennesaw to visit the Fair. She "hopes to retire to the area" and called the Fairgrounds "beautiful." She added that she has never been to another fair with "the tree coverage" and "woody feel" that is so common at the Georgia Mountain Fair.

Fairgoers have stayed busy shopping among the plentiful arts and crafts vendors to purchase useful and aestheti-

cally pleasing goods made with leather, metalwork, knitted goods, jewelry, woodwork, wreaths and snow globes, soaps, lotions, candles and more.

Kids are even able to buy and make their own stuffed animals, visit the barn with ponies and rabbits, and enjoy the new carnival games provided by the massive Amusements of America carnival experience.

Inside the newly renovated Exhibit Hall, attendees can find canned goods for sale, including jams, jellies and honey. At the Exhibit Hall, too, are displays of antique reed organs, quilts, antique farm equipment, and the history of the Fair with photographs from past years.

Blue Ridge EMC has set up an exhibit in the hall detailing the history of electricity in the area as well.

Also renovated for this year's Fair was Pioneer Village, offering guests chances to learn

about what life was like back in 1800s Appalachia. Blacksmithing, woodworking, and moonshine and apple cider making demonstrations are available, and fairgoers can find out about quilting and making hominy and soap.

The David Walker Cabin, built in 1840, and the "Old Homestead" house represent how typical family homes looked back then. Other aspects of yesteryear living, like a schoolhouse and general store, can also be found in the village.

Ken and Sharon Jacobs came up from Tallahassee, Florida, with Sharon explaining that the couple "saw that the festival was going on and thought it would be wonderful to come out and see it."

She particularly enjoyed the Pioneer Village, calling the demonstrations "neat." She added that the "arts and crafts are really cool," too.

When Fair guests get



The Towns County Indians Marching Band put on a tremendous musical show to wow crowds during the annual Fair Parade Aug. 19. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

# Miss GMF Pageant...from Page 1A

lina, group Stardance Performing Arts.

This year's theme was "Queen of the Pioneer Village," and it brought to mind why having a Miss Georgia Mountain Fair is so important.

Pageant hosts Corrina Luckenbach and Mark Ward had the girls pull random questions out of a bowl. Each question had to do with the Georgia Mountain Fair and, by proxy, Appalachian culture, showcasing the young ladies' understanding of the importance of preserving heritage.

One contestant said that crowning a Miss Georgia Mountain Fair ensured the support of a community event that "connects those who came before us." Another said that the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds were unique in covering such a wide range of events to unite everyone.

As the judges convened to decide a winner, the hosts shared fun Fair facts to offer the audience insight into just how far back the event's history goes. The Fair began in 1950, and seeing as only 2,000 guests attended the first year, the annual event has grown exponentially.

Part of this growth can be attributed to the pageant itself, considering the support that some crowned queens show their area. While thanking their sponsors, the hosts showed a video highlighting the Spon-

sor of the Year, Retreat on the Lake, formerly Mull's Motel.

It was there that 2022 Miss Georgia Mountain Fair Sarah Shook had toured and even helped a bit with renovations. Projected onto the big screen, Shook carefully hammered a nail into place as her voiceover narrated how excited she was to see the repurposed hotel once more becoming an asset to her beloved hometown.

And before passing the crown, Shook made an appearance on-stage, marking her final walk before thanking those who had made her reign possible.

Brimming with emotion, Shook admitted to understanding all the hard work that each contestant put into the pageant, and she said that no matter who took up the mantle as queen, each and every one of the young ladies were winners.

"No matter whether you place tonight or not, you all have taken a piece of the Georgia Mountain Fair home with you, and you have given a piece of yourselves to us, and that is just beautiful. And we thank you so, so much for that," said Luckenbach, herself a former Miss Georgia Mountain Fair Queen.

That said, when it came time to reveal the luckiest ladies of the lot, Emily Leonard of Union County took home the title of the Talent Show Winner, earning herself \$75 for her

moving solo dance routine.

Kylee Parker of Rabun County was voted by her peers as Miss Congeniality for possessing "the most positive energy" and an especially kind, outgoing personality that got her \$25 in prize money.

The Second Runner-Up, Jewell Massey of Union County, won \$200 to a roar of cheers and applause. The First Runner-Up, Cara Cole Heerde of Habersham County, received a similar congratulatory cacophony before taking home \$300.

Finally, to a lauding cascade of whistles, whoops, shouts and overall wild acclaim, Caroline Roberts of Rabun County was crowned Miss Georgia Mountain Fair 2023. She will earn her prize of \$2,000 in increments over the next year as she serves as an ambassador for the Fair.

"I think I'm going to pass out," her mother Rebecca uttered through happy tears, rushing to the stage to photograph the happy moment that Shook graced Roberts with her new sash and a sparkling crown of her very own.

At 18 years old, Roberts just graduated high school and plans on going into criminal justice, particularly crime scene investigation.

She cultivates a variety of interests such as sports like archery, hunting, golf and horse riding. In fact, she maintains a job as a trail lead at the Brass-



L-R: Taking home prizes for the 2023 Miss Georgia Mountain Fair Pageant were Emily Leonard of Union County, Cara Cole Heerde of Habersham County, Caroline Roberts of Rabun County, Jewell Massey of Union County, and Kylee Parker of Rabun County. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

town Valley Stables, and in her own words, she likes to "keep (her) options open" when it comes to her time.

"I am a little bit shocked, but I'm very honored to have been chosen," said Roberts, who before now had zero pageant experience. "The other girls did such a good job this year; it was a fair competition."

According to Roberts and her parents, the Rabun residents spend an incredible amount of time in Towns County.

"She took her first steps in Towns County," recalled

proud mother Rebecca, whom Caroline credits, along with her father Reid Roberts, pageant coach Tabitha Egan and even other contenders, with supporting her first steps as Fairgrounds royalty.

Come January, Roberts will be in Atlanta for a state-level pageant but will keep her title as Miss Georgia Mountain Fair for a year. During her reign, she will promote the Fair, including having taken part in the parade Saturday, while making sure to help her community.

"I just was true to my-

self. I tried to have fun with it," said Roberts of her victory, encouraging any girl who dreams of following in her footsteps to take the plunge and believe in herself to become a queen in her own right.

The Georgia Mountain Fair continues this week through Saturday, Aug. 26, with plenty of vendors, carnival action, music and other entertainment inside the Fairgrounds and Anderson Music Hall. Visit <https://georgiamountainfairgrounds.com/> for full scheduling information.



Aqua Tiki Stateline Dock won the Top Prize in the float contest for this patriotically decorated entry in the 2023 Georgia Mountain Fair Parade. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

hungry this week, they can choose from a variety of food vendors throughout the Fairgrounds, with most options located near the Trout Booth music stage. This way, people can enjoy live entertainment as they eat.

There are three other stages where visitors can enjoy music: the Jamboree, Hoot N Nanny, and Pickin' Porch stages. Impromptu jam sessions can be found outside the Exhibit

Hall, and musician Jerry Taylor will be playing one of his many antique organs located inside the hall.

Fairgrounds General Manager Hilda Thomason said the 72nd Annual Georgia Mountain Fair "started off with a bang," noting that the parade was "one of the biggest parades we've had in a long time."

Thomason added that she and the Fairgrounds "really appreciate all of the donations and

all the sponsorships" they have received in 2023 "to make all of this happen," on top of the many volunteers and Fair patrons who have made this, once again, truly a "community effort."

Tickets for the Fair start at just \$6. For more information on what is to come during the remaining days of the Fair this week, check out <https://georgiamountainfairgrounds.com/localevents/fair>.

# LEO Feud Discussed...from Page 1A



At the request of multiple residents in the Movers & Shakers meeting, Sheriff Ken Henderson and Hiawassee Police Chief Jeremy Parker met face to face at Sundance Grill Aug. 18. Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

to work with everybody, but we have some issues whether they have the right to go out in the county and stop people," said Henderson of the Hiawassee Police Department.

"Do they have the jurisdiction to do that?" Henderson continued. "We have some issues with car chases across our county that reaches 150 miles per hour and is endangering your lives, your family's lives and other people's lives for minor traffic violations."

Henderson said his phone has "rang off the hook" with calls complaining about the allegedly erratic driving of city police, and he cited examples of people claiming to have been "ran off the road," "went up the banks" or chased "into a ditch," though the Hiawassee Police Department has denied such allegations.

Clarifying that the above events had nothing to do with the Sheriff's Office, Henderson felt it prudent to add, "This was not us. And I don't want this to sound like I don't want to work with (the Police Department) - I do - but you got to come out, reach out, and we all got to understand the laws in that I'm the sheriff of Towns County and I'm responsible for that."

As it relates to public safety, Henderson said he felt responsible for the City of Hiawassee's actions and so made the decision to try and contact Mayor Liz Ordiales for reconciliation and understanding "at least 10 times," only to be denied.

Despite saying that "we don't want to end up in court," Henderson has hired a lawyer for expert opinion "to try and fix this problem that we've been trying to fix forever."

For the time being, Henderson reassured the audience that he and his deputies would continue to patrol Hiawassee and ensure its safety, working alongside the city police to dispel threats and keep Towns County safe.

"I want to work with the city, but they've got to reach out as well," said Henderson in closing.

When reached for comment, Mayor Ordiales painted a different picture of the state of communications between the city and TCSO, referencing an incident from earlier this year that the city has been trying to resolve with the Sheriff's Office.

"On May 2, there was a missing juvenile in Towns County," Ordiales said. "The city was not notified of the incident and there was a conversation had with Chief Jeremy

Parker and Sheriff Henderson about the lack of communication of the incident. I spoke with the sheriff about meeting with him the following day, and we agreed to meet the following week.

"On Monday, May 8, I received a call from the sheriff's attorney, Mr. Preston Halliburton, telling me he was representing the sheriff and was doing research on the matters in the county. I contacted Sheriff Henderson and advised that we should wait until his attorney had information to share with us. He agreed.

"To date I have not heard back from either Mr. Halliburton or Sheriff Henderson. The most important issue for me is the safety and wellbeing of our citizens and of the city's police department.

"I am open to meeting with Sheriff Henderson whenever he is ready. Chief Parker runs his police department very efficiently. We meet weekly, and I support his decisions."

Also in the meeting, YHC Police Chief Robbie Rich came up to talk about the drone program and how it's been used on both the college campus and as part of countywide law enforcement efforts. Rich became chief in January 2021, boasting a law career of about 20 years.

The capabilities of the new piece of technology are impressive; the drone has a speaker and thermal camera, and while it's too large to fit into a building, Rich is looking to purchase more drones in the future to improve not just college security, but that of the Sheriff's Office as well, considering he works part-time for Henderson.

Commenting on the sort of issues he's experienced on campus in his career, "You see a lot underage drinking over the years," and he added that there haven't been many "violent crimes" to speak of, thankfully.

Keep an eye out during the month of November when Rich will be bringing the drone for a public look and demonstration of flight.

After the meeting, Henderson and Police Chief Jeremy Parker, who attended that morning, could be seen speaking in the back of the restaurant flanked by friends attempting to resolve the feud between the agencies. Apparently, the conversation was not fruitful.

Chief Parker said afterward that he wanted to comment on the "multitude of false allegations made by Sheriff Henderson, to include not returning phone calls to his attorney regarding violations that

we are allegedly doing, pursuits exceeding 150 MPH, and pursuits for seatbelt and minor swerving violations."

Parker said he had "no knowledge of any police 'chases' over seatbelt infractions or a minor swerve," and like Ordiales, the police chief referenced communication issues encountered during the missing juvenile incident from May.

"In a conversation with Sheriff Henderson on May 2, he told me that he would not work with me, did not have to share any information with me, and he made derogatory comments towards me and my father, who has no dealing with either agency's issues," Parker said.

"Sheriff Henderson told me he would only work with the mayor and would not have any dealings with me," he continued. "This was regarding a missing juvenile who was reported to have been in the Hiawassee area at a gas station."

"At the conclusion of the phone call, I had to contact Clay County Sheriff's Office (in North Carolina) to obtain the information, which was determined that the missing juvenile had already passed through the city. That lapse in information exchange luckily didn't have a tragic ending, and the juvenile was later located safely.

"I'm confused as to who Sheriff Henderson wants to communicate with. I have not heard any communication from an attorney regarding any issues with our department. The only issue that I have heard from the Sheriff's Office is regarding police pursuits.

"Case Law has upheld that law enforcement agencies may pursue and issue citations for violations that occurred inside their jurisdiction, when the pursuit or traffic stop location enters or ends in another jurisdiction.

"When any law enforcement officer turns on their emergency equipment (lights/siren) to stop a vehicle, they are considered to be in pursuit of that vehicle until it comes to a stop. I agree that high-speed pursuits are dangerous, and they will not be tolerated by the Hiawassee Police Department or myself, for minor traffic violations.

"I have served Towns County for 21 years through the Towns County Fire Department, Towns County EMS, and the Towns County Sheriff's Office in the Detention Center and Patrol areas. I would never allow my officers to intentionally put this community in danger."