

Towns County Herald

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Wednesday, August 24, 2022

Shook crowned 2022 Miss Georgia Mountain Fair

By Jeremy Foster
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

On Thursday, Aug. 18, as a prelude to the nine-day 71st Annual Georgia Mountain Fair, the 2022 Miss Georgia Mountain Fair Beauty Pageant high-lighted talented young ladies of the area, with Towns County High School Senior Sarah Shook ultimately taking home the crown.

As 2022 winner, Shook will serve as the official ambassador of the Georgia Mountain Fair in various events set to occur over the next year.

Staged inside Anderson Music Hall at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds, the contest was open to competitors ages 17-24, with two main fashion categories of competition – athletic wear and evening gowns – and the ladies

were given ample opportunities to demonstrate their personalities.

Judging the competition were Hope Martin, Mark Ward and Brittney Tankersley, with Lisa Baxter as auditor, and throughout the pageant, the Star Dancers Team out of Hayesville, North Carolina, kept audiences captivated with performing arts dance routines.

Before the event started, first-time Fair Pageant Director and Coordinator Ann Moody, owner of the Hiwassee-based Brooke + Blair Bridal, discussed the organizational aspects of the pageant and the impact it has on the contestants.

"It is all-year planning to put this on," Moody said. "Within six months, we are sending out the entries on social media, and then we meet every month for the next six months, and then every week

for the last month leading up to the big night.

"The impact for the girls is a team-building thing. Yes, it is a competition, and at the end of the day there is only one winner, but for everybody, it is all about coming together and entertaining the crowd for a bit, and for everybody supporting the community and the Fairgrounds.

"More importantly, we all get to see their wonderful hearts and personalities, and I believe the girls learn more about themselves when it is said and done, and it just makes them feel better as an absolute confidence booster."

Israel Rogers emceed the event, introducing pageant participants and asking them questions to show their public speaking skills, thoughts on life's challenges, and various other topics pertinent to their



Sarah Shook of Towns County won it all at the 2022 Miss Georgia Mountain Fair Pageant last week. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

ideas surrounding coming of age into adulthood.

Competitors were: Brenlee Parker, 16, of Towns; Carlee Moody, 17, of Towns; Ashley Bradburn, 17, of Union;

Abby Joyce, 17, of Clay; Sarah Shook, 17, of Towns; Emma Hyatt, 18, of Cherokee; Kylee Parker, 19, of Rabun; Ivie Davenport, 19, of Towns; and Karah Shea, 23, of Towns.

Miss Congeniality was the first award presented that evening, having been chosen by the contestants themselves to be Ashley Bradburn.

See Miss GMF Pageant, Page 8A

Hiwassee approves package store licensing moratorium

By Mark Smith
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

In response to local feedback, the Hiwassee City Council held a special called meeting on Wednesday, Aug. 17, in which council members voted unanimously to approve a resolution enacting a moratorium on the issuance of new liquor store licenses until Jan. 17, 2023.

The council agreed to

consider limiting either the number of or distance between local package stores after hearing from multiple residents and business owners, including Hiwassee Package owner Simon Illikattil, who attended the July 25 council work session to express his concerns about an in-progress third license application inside city limits.

In that city session, Illikattil shared his belief that, based on his research, the small

local population of Hiwassee and Towns County would not be able to financially support more than the current two package stores in the city.

Resulting from the council and Mayor Liz Ordiales agreeing to consider the issue, the moratorium will "facilitate further study of package store licenses in anticipation of amending the city's regulatory scheme as to the number

See Moratorium, Page 2A



As of the Aug. 17 Hiwassee City Council vote, a moratorium is now in place through Jan. 17, 2023, on the issuance of new liquor licenses. Photo by Mark Smith

Heritage Festival to return over Labor Day Weekend '22

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

BLAIRSVILLE – Following a two-year hiatus due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the Union County Historical Society is bringing back an important local tradition: the Heritage Festival.

Taking place as usual on the historic grounds of the 1906 Grapelle Butt Mock House in Downtown Blairsville, the Heritage Festival will run two days over Labor Day Weekend, Sept. 3-4, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on both Saturday and Sunday.

As the name suggests, the Heritage Festival honors the cultural roots of the North Georgia Mountains, showcasing for modern people the older ways of the area's progenitors.

See Heritage Festival, Page 5A



The 1906 Grapelle Butt Mock House, a beautiful country home with a recently completed annex, will serve as the venue for the Heritage Festival Labor Day Weekend. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

Bradshaw talks renovations, campground fees, bait drops & more

By Mark Smith
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw covered many issues in his monthly meeting on Tuesday, Aug. 16, which was held at the Towns County Courthouse.

Bradshaw said the air conditioning units for the Old Rec Gym, where courthouse operations will move to during the upcoming major renovation/addition project, were finally delivered.

"The good news is we're done with about 95% of the framing," he said. "The electrician is pretty much done. The IT guy has pulled all of his wires. We're getting very, very close. We think we'll be moving out of the courthouse ... (hopefully) the first couple weeks of October."

"We're still in negotiations with Reeves & Young on getting the final price on everything (for the courthouse renovation/addition). All this inflation has not been our friend at all, but we're getting there."

"We feel very, very confident that, barring any unforeseen problems, we'll be debt-free at the end of the project."

As for bad news, Bradshaw said the county still doesn't have detainee crews to help with mowing and such. He said they had contracted for three full-time crews but have only been able to get one crew "now and then," because anytime even one detainee is diagnosed with COVID-19, all of the crews are quarantined.

To keep pace with rising costs, an amendment to the

fee schedule for the Chatuge Campground was adopted by Bradshaw.

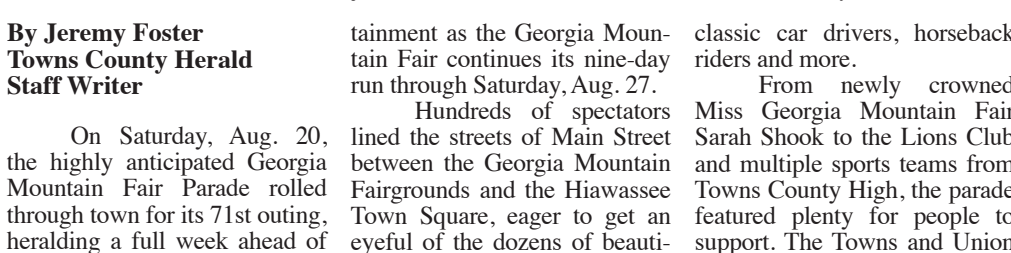
"Basically, what we're doing is going up \$50 across the board (on monthly rentals)," Bradshaw said. "Monthly lakeside was \$250 per month. It is now \$300. Off-water was \$200, now it's \$250," he said, adding that the new fees are more in line with nearby counties but still cheaper.

The commissioner also approved a 25-year easement renewal with the Tennessee Val-



Cliff Bradshaw
Sole Commissioner

GA Mountain Fair Parade a massive hit with spectators



Hiwassee Park Senior Living Community placed first in the annual Georgia Mountain Fair Parade float contest on Saturday. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

School Board adopts new policies, talks 2022-2023 year

By Jeremy Foster
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Towns County Schools started the 2022-23 year without a hitch earlier this month, with school administrators, staff and students glad to be back in classrooms after a long summer break.

Prior to the Aug. 4 first day, School Board members held their pre-back-to-school work session and business meeting on Aug. 1 to discuss an array of business.

In the regular meeting, board members held a second reading and approval for new policies regarding state requirements that schools adopt a Divisive Concepts Complaint Resolution Process, a Material Harmful to Minors Complaint Resolution, and a Parents' Bill

of Rights. These policies come in the wake of 2022 state legislation aimed at addressing concerns expressed by Georgia parents pertaining to the potential for certain concepts being taught around, and age-inappropriate sexual content.

The Divisive Concepts and Material Harmful to Minors Complaint Resolution policies are primarily designed to prohibit discrimination and specific instruction based on such concepts and provide a means of redress for parents.

Similarly, the new policies pertaining to the state-enacted Parents' Bill of Rights are aimed at ensuring parents have a "fundamental right to direct the upbringing and education of their minor children" and that



Darren Berrong
TCS Superintendent

schools cannot keep from parents certain information about their children.

The Parents' Bill of Rights guarantees parents ac-

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Lake Levels
Blue Ridge 1,682.96
Chatuge 1,923.55
Nottely 1,772.45



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SPORTS

SOFTBALL

Aug. 24 @ Cedar Shoals 5PM

FOOTBALL

Aug. 26 vs. LOA 7:30 PM



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Gospel Music Festival

Aug. 26-27
Blairsville

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Blacksmith Caleb Ledford

@ Movers & Shakers
Aug. 26

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Moratorium...from Page 1A

of licenses within the City of Hiawasse.

The resolution reads as follows:

“Whereas the Mayor and City Council find that the public health, safety, welfare and property values of the public in general are impacted by the number, location, size, and attributes of certain businesses located within the Town;

“Whereas the City has limited number of package store licenses based only on proximity to residences, the nearest school building, school ground or college campus, and the nearest alcoholic treatment center owned and operated by the State or any county or municipal government therein;

“Whereas the City needs to study and ascertain the appropriate level of regulation and location of such establishments in light of the existing licenses;

“Whereas the City and its staff have the ability to study the appropriate number, location, and regulation of these establishments;

“Whereas the Mayor and City Council find that it is within the interest of the public generally to maintain the status quo within the City for a temporary, limited period of time in order to permit the City and staff to further study the impact of said establishments;

“Whereas, by studying such issues in contemplation of amending its ordinance, the Town Council intends to:

1. further the objectives of the City’s Comprehensive Plan and Planning Ordinance;
2. protect the public health, safety, and welfare;
3. protect property values by minimizing the possible adverse effects; and

4. promote economic development.

“Now, therefore, be it resolved, and it is hereby resolved by the Mayor and City Council of the City of Hiawasse, as follows:

“The City or its employees shall not accept or process applications for package store licenses until January 17, 2023, or until the date of the repeal of this Resolution, whichever event first occurs; provided, however, any complete application filed prior to the date of adoption of this Resolution shall duly be acted upon under the prevailing ordinances, rules, and regulations of the City of Hiawasse.

“Be it further resolved that the City and its staff shall study the impact and appropriate location of such establishments within the City of Hiawasse and shall make recommendations and develop and refine regulations for the City of Hiawasse on or before

January 17, 2023.”

The resolution went into effect immediately and was signed by the mayor and all members of the city council, attested to by City Clerk Bonnie Kendrick, and approved as to form by City Attorney Thomas Mitchell.

Originally, the city intended to allow free market operation regarding package store licensing, as the council is a free market-oriented body.

However, package stores have much higher start-up costs and are more heavily regulated by the state than, say, a hair salon or small restaurant, so the city will be looking at different considerations when it comes to number and location.

“I feel that we should review our Alcohol Ordinance to address additional requirements to operate a package store,” Ordiales said. “Our priority is the safety and public health of our citizens.

“We should ensure that

we study the appropriate number, location and regulations that should be imposed on this regulated business.

“Package stores must invest substantial revenue that is not required of other businesses in the city. We also want to protect our existing businesses that might be affected.

“This moratorium will provide (through Jan. 17, 2023) to research and enhance the state-mandated requirements.”

Ordiales said she does not anticipate it will take the entire length of the moratorium “to review our Alcohol Ordinance to address additional requirements to operate a package store.”

The abovementioned third liquor store license was completed in time before the moratorium took effect last week, and according to City Hall, no other license applications had been filed prior to the moratorium.

County Meeting...from Page 1A

ley Authority for continued use of the Chatuge Campground.

In other county news, Wildlife Biologist Daymond Hughes of the USDA Wildlife Services Division gave a presentation on the Oral Rabies Vaccination Program, specifically, on rabies vaccine bait drops that will be happening in Towns County.

Starting in mid-October, bait drops will be done with fixed-wing aircraft. An airplane will make several passes over an area, dropping small packets containing vaccine. The packets are coated with wax and rolled in fish meal to attract racoons, which are the

primary carriers of rabies in Georgia.

Hughes said the bait-drop aircraft will fly very low, about 500 feet above ground level, and drop about 75 baits per square kilometer, in bait lines about 1,500 feet apart, which means the aircraft will make several passes over a bait zone where there may be residential dwellings.

The baits have been tested on several animals and are harmless to pets, he said. As the baits have been known to cause a minor rash in humans, if found, people should use gloves or a plastic bag to pick up baits and throw them into the woods where the target animals can get to them.

Moving along, Bradshaw said the 2021 financial audit has been completed and submitted, and the findings should be returned before the next meeting when an announcement will be made.

The commissioner said Towns County received a \$4,000 grant for the Road Department from the Association County Commissioners of Georgia with no matching requirement. The money was spent on much-needed traffic control, safety and communications equipment.

Tax revenues and collections in the county are on target and going well, said Bradshaw: “Pray for good weather for the Georgia Mountain Fair so we have lots of visitors.”

And, finally, Joint Economic Development Director Denise McKay announced in the meeting that the Appalachian Regional Commission had re-rated Towns County as “Transitional.”

“This is really good news,” McKay said. “Since 2017, Towns County has been classified as ‘At-Risk,’ mean-

ing economically distressed. They came out with a new rating for 2023; we’re back to a ‘Transitional’ county, which is what most everybody else in the state is.”

McKay said the re-classification is based on things like lower unemployment, job creation, and more economic investment in the county, which is great for Towns County and both Hiawasse and Young Harris, even though it means a higher matching component for ARC grants.

She went on to say the redesignation could not have happened without the positive cooperation between the county commissioner and both city mayors.

Commissioner Bradshaw holds his regular monthly meetings on the third Tuesday of each month, beginning at 5:30 p.m. at the courthouse.

UNG Degrees for 2022 Graduates

For the summer 2022 semester, the University of North Georgia (UNG) awarded almost 530 degrees and more than 40 certificates to graduates. Almost 300 graduates participated in the summer 2022 commencement ceremony held August 5 at the Convocation Center on UNG’s Dahlonega Campus.

Diego Guido of Hiawasse, GA, graduated with an Associate of Arts in Business Administration Pathway.

T(Aug24.A1)JH

Arrest and Fire Reports

Local law enforcement provides the following information for publication. Names are spelled as they were when received from the law enforcement agencies. It is important to remember that the following individuals have been charged only and are presumed innocent until such time as they are found guilty by a court or enter a guilty plea. Addresses of persons under arrest are no longer available from Sheriff’s Office.



ARREST REPORT

Towns County Jail
Sheriff Ken Henderson

08/16/22	Chelsey Joy Elizabeth Brock, age 28 Marijuana-possess less than 1 OZ, possession and use of drug related objects, possession of firearm or knife during commission of or attempt to commit certain, possession of methamphetamine, probation violation (when probation terms are altered) for fingerprintable charge, receipt, possession or transports of firearm by convicted felon or felony first
08/15/22	Johnathan Clyde Dills, age 40 Failure to appear for fingerprintable charge-felony
08/15/22	Amy Jean Dockery, age 53 Failure to appear for fingerprintable charge-felony
08/21/22	Bernard Oliver Durham, age 43 Aggravated battery, battery
08/16/22	Shaun Keith Ewing, age 40 Criminal trespass, marijuana-possess less than 1 OZ, possession and use of drug related objects, possession of firearm or knife during commission of or attempt to commit certain, possession of methamphetamine, probation violation (when probation terms are altered) for fingerprintable charge, receipt, possession or transport of firearm by convicted felon or felony first
08/18/22	Joshua Blake Gerrald, age 29 Theft by receiving stolen property-misdemeanor (2), willful obstruction of law enforcement officers-misdemeanor, theft by taking- misdemeanor, driving while license suspended or revoked (misdemeanor), entering automobile or other motor vehicle with intent to commit theft or felony, failure to drive within single lane, hit and run; duty of driver to stop at or return to scene of accident, theft by receiving property stolen in an other state- misdemeanor, theft by receiving stolen property-misdemeanor, theft by taking-misdemeanor (4)
08/18/22	Travis Lynne Miller, age 49 Aggravated assault
08/20/22	Gary Artiss Segars, age 52 Drugs not in original container-misdemeanor, DUI-driving under the influence of alcohol
08/17/22	Kolby William Starner, age 24 Failure to register as sex offender/ failure to comply with requirements provided, probation violation (when probation terms are altered) for fingerprintable charge, registered sex offender restricted residence when act was on after July 1, 2008
08/19/22	Michael Alan Barrett, age 33 Prowling
08/17/22	Cynthia Lee Becker, age 68 Failure to appear for fingerprintable charge-misdemeanor
08/18/22	Amanda Auberry Duvall, age 41 False statements or writings; conceal facts or fraudulent documents in matters
08/15/22	Ryman Lionel Fair, age 64 Possession and use of drug related objects, possession of a schedule I controlled substance, possession of methamphetamine (2), purchase, possession, manufacture, distribution, or sale of marijuana, sale of methamphetamine
08/19/22	Erin Lee Murrh, age 43 Possession of cocaine (2), possession of a schedule II controlled substance (2), purchase, possession, manufacture, distribution, or sale of marijuana, sale of marijuana
08/16/22	John Travis Pass, age 40 DUI-driving under the influence of alcohol, failure to drive within single lane

School Board...from Page 1A

Principal Shannon Moss said that “the lights are bright in the school because we have added several new LED lights throughout to make it brighter, (and) the floors are looking great after some extra work done on them.”

“We also have some new signs for the school coming to make it easier to navigate,” he said. “We have sand coming, mats underneath the swings, new mulch as well, so we are thankful for that.”

Moss also noted that “total enrollment so far is 447, which was 425 this time last year, so we look forward to a new and bigger year.”

Next, Middle School Principal Dr. Connie Hobbs said that her school had also gotten some new LED lights installed.

“And we have our entire gym back, so the weight room has doubled in size since the maintenance crew has moved out to their new building,” she said, adding that the Robotics Team had moved into a new classroom as well.

“We are going to administer our first (Measures of Academic Progress) test in the next few weeks,” Hobbs said, “and teachers will use that to determine the instruction for the upcoming year to see where students are.

“We are going to continue to do the same (COVID-19) protocols that we have done in the past as far as sanitizing the classrooms and handwashing ... and watching the flow of traffic of students through the hallways.

“Our middle school enrollment this time last year was at 214. Today when I checked we were at 210, and we enrolled 15 new students this summer with probably more to come in the week.”

High School Principal Roy Perren touched on safety matters, in which he said that the GBI and local law enforcement “did some training here in the summer, and we want to thank them for getting familiar with our school if they ever

have to come here.”

“It looks like we are going to start with 320 students, which is up from 195 at the end of last school year,” Perren said.

In his Superintendent Report, Berrong spoke on some minor school projects that were being wrapped up.

“We will be putting a nice sign (for the Elementary School) up here at the top because you can barely see the one at the bottom of the hill, to make it clearer to distinguish the buildings for our visitors,” Berrong said. That sign has since been installed.

Continuing, “The walkways have been pressure washed and are looking good, and we are about to brick the baseball dugouts to match the backstop, which will hopefully be done before the first football game.

“We would like to get at least one school bus that has the coach seats for the long trips that we have and, depending on the price, we may be able to purchase two of those.”

As for the most recent Georgia Milestones assessment scores, Berrong said those would be reported on next month, “but we did get the comparisons in, and I will say that they look really good. We compared very well and came in first in numerous subjects.”

Switching gears, Berrong talked about an upcoming school security initiative on Aug. 25 at 10 a.m.

“We (will be having) a security software presentation that will show a button that you press three times that goes on the back of your name badge, and that sends an indication to the administration that they need help in the classroom, and continuous pressing will alert 911,” Berrong said.

The Towns County Board of Education meets the first Monday of each month starting at 6 p.m. in the Middle/High School Media Center.

Sheriff's Office makes arrests for drugs, assault

News Special
Towns County Herald

Last week, Towns County Sheriff's Office investigators identified a co-defendant in the Aug. 10 drug raid at Bald Mountain Park.

An arrest warrant was issued for Ryman Lionel Fair, 64, of Hiawassee. He was arrested Aug. 15 at a residence in the Soapstone Community by uniform patrol deputies following up on a lead as to his whereabouts.

Fair has been charged with possession of methamphetamine with intent to distribute, possession of LSD, possession of Schedule IV controlled substance, possession of less than an ounce of marijuana, and possession of drug-related objects.

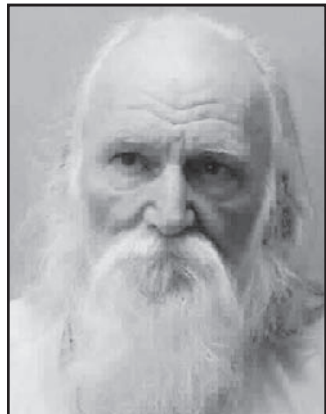
Sheriff Ken Henderson was pleased with the teamwork between investigators and patrol deputies to locate Fair, who is the homeowner of the residence where the raid occurred and is also a co-defendant with Dianna Lynn Foster, 58, of Hiawassee, who was arrested on Aug. 10.

In a separate incident last week on Thursday, Aug. 18, at approximately 6 p.m., the Towns County Sheriff's Office received a call of a person who was cut at the TVA Campground on Highway 75 in Hiawassee.

The victim was treated by EMS and transported to a local hospital, having stated he was attacked with a knife by suspect Travis Miller.

Travis Lynne Miller, 49, of Hiawassee, was located and arrested by sheriff's deputies at a nearby location and charged with aggravated assault. Miller was transported to the Towns County Detention Center.

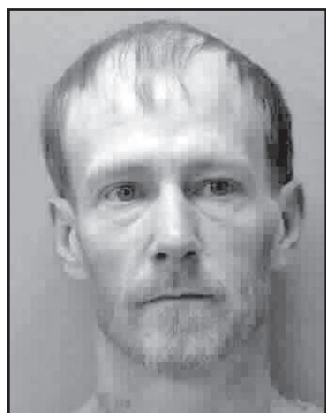
In yet another separate



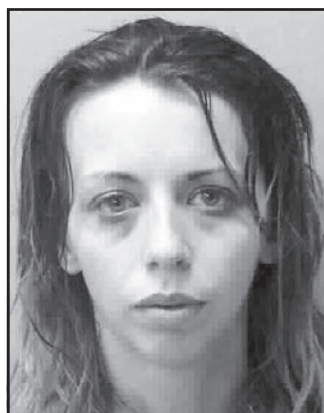
Ryman Lionel Fair



Travis Lynne Miller



Shaun Keith Ewing



Chelsea Joy Elizabeth Brock

recent incident, the Towns County Sheriff's Office received a complaint of drug activity at a residence on Natures Way in Hiawassee.

After a lengthy investigation, Towns County drug agents discovered a person living at the location who was wanted on an arrest warrant. During the execution of the warrant, methamphetamine, marijuana and drug-related objects were discovered.

Chelsea Joy Elizabeth Brock, 28, who is wanted out of Fannin County, and Shaun Keith Ewing, 40, were arrested.

Brock has been charged with possession of firearm/

knife during the commission of a crime, possession of a firearm by a convicted felon, possession of methamphetamine, possession of less than an ounce of marijuana, and possession of drug-related objects.

Ewing has been charged with possession of firearm/knife during the commission of a crime, possession of a firearm by a convicted felon, possession of methamphetamine, possession of less than an ounce of marijuana, possession of drug-related objects and criminal trespass.

The above individuals have been charged only and are presumed innocent until found guilty in a court of law.

Heritage Festival...from Page 1A

And as the saying goes, people need to know where they've been to know where they're going.

The festival puts history first by celebrating the old-time mountain customs of Union County on the grounds of the Mountain Life Museum, which, in addition to the Butt Mock House, features the 1861 John Payne Cabin, the Duncan Cabin and much more, including historical artifacts.

Always free for the public to attend, this year's festival – again, returning for the first time since 2019 – will host more than 60 vendors offering everything from food to handmade arts and crafts, and live music will be available throughout the festival as well.

Of course, the history of it all is the central theme of the Heritage Festival, and to say that much has changed in terms of living standards and technology over the years is perhaps the understatement of the past two centuries.

People who have never attended will likely be surprised at how stark the differences are between modern times and the way people lived just a couple generations ago, before electricity and the convenience of industrialization permeated the communities of North Georgia.

These stark differences will be on display in "living history" demonstrations, with volunteers dressed in outfits from bygone eras performing



The 1861 Payne Cabin rests on the property of the Mountain Life Museum, where Heritage Festival guests will be able to watch "living history" demonstrations.

Photo by Shawn Jarrard

what were once everyday tasks in the early years of Union County, such as spinning, quilting, blacksmithing, churning and cooking at a fire.

Students with the local Future Farmers of America will also be on hand to offer a petting zoo for families and showcase some of their animal projects, and something always popular with the kids is the Gold Panning activity returning in 2022.

In addition to offering a one-of-a-kind view back in time, the other purpose of the Heritage Festival is to act as a fundraiser for the Union County Historical Society, which is run primarily by volunteers

who care deeply about preserving that which came before.

During festival hours, the Old Courthouse Museum on the Square will be open for people to venture through for an even deeper look into the history of Union County and the area, and people should keep in mind there are plenty of keepsakes to purchase to support the society.

So, come Labor Day Weekend, head on over to the Mock House for the return of a time-honored local tradition, and in so doing, support the people who work hard behind the scenes to remember where North Georgia has been so its people can better know where they may go.

Public Art Project Workshops announced for Hiawassee



The Hiawassee Downtown Development Authority (DDA) announced that on September 13 and September 14, the public is invited to attend workshops led by Designing Local to develop a public art strategy for Hiawassee.

The workshops will be held at the Towns County Civic Center, 67 Lakeview Circle, Hiawassee, GA. On September 13, 6 PM to 9 PM, art consultants from Designing Local will discuss public art, what it is, why it is important, and how cities across the country are using it to build their identity and strengthen their communities. On September 14, 9 AM to 4 PM, the morning workshop will include opportunities to develop community value statements and a vision for a public art collection. Fol-

lowing lunch, the afternoon workshop will include opportunities to prioritize locations and ideate conceptual public art projects for each location. Resource opportunities to fund the projects will also be explored.

Everyone is invited to attend and is requested to RSVP for the workshops on the DDA's Facebook page to prepare appropriate amounts of food/beverages and workshop materials.

Designing Local was selected to lead the project through a competitive process by the DDA board. The firm is dedicated to helping communities connect people to place through culture, and has worked on more than 30 public art master plans in 15 different states.

"We are so excited to have the experience of the principals, Amanda Golden and Josh Lapp," said Peggy Gardner, DDA chair. "Their deep, and broad, experience will guide us in designing a program that is inspired by us, and for us, the residents

of Hiawassee. Their proposal had great examples of how other cities have approached a similar project, and they will focus on examples that are especially relevant to small communities."

Residents are encouraged to complete a short survey to inform this process before the workshops, which is available at Art survey. The winning proposal from Designing Local, as well as the survey link, are posted at <https://linktr.ee/hiawassedda>. The survey asks residents to share what they want people to think or feel about Hiawassee or Towns County, and to recommend locations appropriate for public art. Anyone who would like to receive updates on the project also can leave their email address.

"Art has for centuries been used to inspire, educate and create a sense of place," Gardner added. "This is an opportunity for our residents to bring their talents to develop a vision and plan for Hiawassee."

The Hiawassee Garden Club brightens Veterans Park

The Hiawassee Garden Club was asked to brighten up the doorway downstairs at the VFW Post on Sunnyside in Towns County. One of our members, Cheryl Gehring, always plants the big pots at the Veterans Park in front of Towns County Schools and she came through with two big pots for the post which will have color during the fall and then have greenery through the cold winter. We are always happy to help our veterans in any way possible.

The Garden Club meeting on July 28 was well attended and any loose ends were wrapped up for the Judges Brunch and the Flower Show at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds on August 19-21 during the 2022 Georgia Mountain Fair.

Twenty-five Flower Show Judges come from different parts of Georgia to judge the show each year. The members of Hiawassee Garden Club have a brunch prepared for them at their clubhouse before the judges go to the Fairgrounds Garden Club building. Judging takes several hours so the Flower show opens at 2 PM on the first day of the Fair, Friday, August 19.

It takes most of that week to get the building ready, do the staging and then enter the many specimens of lo-

Drive-Thru Flu Clinic Event

The Towns County Health Department will host a Drive-Thru Flu Event in the parking lot at 1104 Jack Dayton Cir. Young Harris, GA, 30582 on September 27 from 8 AM-6 PM. Show up for your shot!

For more information please contact the Towns County Health Department at (706) 896-2265. T(Aug24,1)JH

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(Aug24,1)JH



L-R: Ann Brown, Joan Crothers, Diann Nichols, and Emma Burch

cal horticulture brought in by members and the public. The design section is especially creative and fun to see how the categories are interpreted by

our members.

This year the Flower Show is titled "Plant America the Beautiful" with staging in a patriotic theme. T(Aug24,2)JH

Blacksmith Caleb Ledford Joins the Mountain Movers and Shakers



From time to time we uncover hidden gems in our mountains. On August 26 at 8 AM, we are truly proud to introduce you all to Caleb Ledford, master blacksmith and his Ledford Forge in Young Harris.

Are you familiar with the TV show Forged in Fire? It's a competition between Master Smiths to craft an item, be it a Roman Gladius or a Viking Battle Ax or a Bowie Knife, often from some bizarre material (nuts and bolts and ball bearings all stuffed in a pipe that must be forged into a billet), all within a time frame. See Caleb competed on Forged in Fire on www.ledfordworks.com, and check out



Caleb Ledford

some of his masterpieces on the website.

Get to the Sundance Grill early to get a good seat to meet this master smith, and hear him speak about his craft, his forge, and the many smithy classes he offers, from an afternoon to a week. Support our local craftsman and artists, they are part of the fabric of our mountains. T(Aug24,1)JH

Towns County Community Calendar

First Monday of each month:		
School Board	HS/MS Media Center	6:45 pm
First Tuesday of each month:		
Hiaw. City Council	City Hall	6 pm
Young Harris City Council	YH City Hall	7 pm
Second Tuesday of each month:		
Conventions & Visitors Board	Civic Center	8 am
Second Wednesday every other month:		
Board of Elections	Elections Office	4 pm
Third Monday of each month:		
Planning Commission	Civic Center	6 pm
Water Board	Water Office	6 pm
Third Tuesday of each month:		
Commissioner's Mtg.	Courthouse	5:30 pm

Fair Parade...from Page 1A



Towns County Firewise Citizens Coalition fully embraced the “Surfin’ USA” theme for the 2022 Georgia Mountain Fair Parade, with even 78-year-old Smokey Bear joining in on the fun Saturday.
Photo by Lowell Nicholson

County High bands even got in on the action, playing music for all to enjoy.

Towns County Sheriff Ken Henderson led the parade, and the Parade Grand Marshal was none other than multi-term District 8 State Rep. Stan Gunter being driven around by Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw in a Shelby Mustang.

Always an integral part of the parade is the float design contest, which both encourages entrants into the parade and ensures that those entrants will do their best to provide crowd-pleasing spectacles.

And the participants for the 2022 parade did not disappoint, with winners grabbing up a whopping \$8,000 in prize money.

The Towns County Softball Team placed third, earning \$1,500; the Towns County FBLA, FFA and HOSA clubs with a combined float placed second for \$2,500; and Hiwassee Park Senior Living Community won First Place and the biggest prize of all, \$4,000.

Eller Electronics & Collage Boutique owner Ashley Eller, a Hiwassee native, literally closed his shop to enjoy the sights and sounds of the regionally renowned parade tradition.

“Besides catching events from time to time at the Fairgrounds, I really like the parade a lot because I enjoy all of the lights and spinny things and other theatrics about the floats,” Eller said. “My other favorite part of the parade is looking at the classic cars come by.”

“I grew up with parades, so it is a part of my history in a sense, and it is just nice because it does involve all of the communities, the high schools, the colleges and local people, and gives everyone the chance to be a part of it.”

Added Eller, “Each year I see the parade, I think it gets better and better, and things like this are important for the community because it does give everyone the chance to meet new people and relax for a bit and enjoy everything going on, together.”

For her part, Fairgrounds General Manager Hilda Thomason could not have been happier with the parade or with this year’s edition of the Georgia Mountain Fair, which continues through Saturday.

“Everything has gone wonderful this year so far, and we had a really good opening day,” Thomason said. “Saturday was wonderful with Mark Chesnutt and Tracy Byrd; it was one of the biggest crowds we have ever had here at the Fairgrounds. They were parked all the way up to the Hamilton Gardens parking lot. We have had wall-to-wall people here, and it has just been great.”

“And we want to say a big thank you to everyone who participated in and organized the parade. We really appreciate all the time they put into the floats and all of the community support.”

There is certainly no lack of interesting and fun things to look forward to at the Fairgrounds year-round, and in the near term, there’s plenty more for people to do as the Georgia Mountain Fair continues this week.

Dozens and dozens of



Country Music artist Tracy Byrd headlined an Aug. 20 concert at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds, and the turnout was massive. Music for the Georgia Mountain Fair continues nightly through Saturday.
Photo by Derek Storm

small and local vendors await fairgoers inside the Fairgrounds, selling everything from food to handmade arts and crafts and more.

There’s also the Pioneer Village and authentic historical demonstrations showcasing the various ways people used to live back in the day.

And don’t forget the live musical offerings that run every single day, with shows inside the Anderson Music Hall included with the price of admission into the Fair.

Plus, this year, there are several new offerings in the form of the daredevil act Majestik Spectacular, with its hair-raising motorcycle cage stunts in the “Dominguez Family Globe of Death,” and the Banana Derby featuring canine acrobatics and a monkey riding “dogback.”

Of course, people will have a hard time missing 10-foot Rollo, billed as the “The Biggest Little Kid in the World!”

“Rollo creates comedy in crowded situations,” according to Fair literature. “He uses comedic bits and improvised skits to attract attention around him resulting in laughter, comical dance and movement, rope jumping, audience participation,

and, oh yea, he shrinks himself – all on stilts!”

In addition to this and much more at the Fair is the always popular carnival, hosted in 2022 by the massive traveling Amusements of America. Kids have been piling into the carnival by the thousands since the start of the Fair, and amid all the amazing rides is a big new Ferris wheel.

Attendance for the Fair is \$12 per person each day, with kids under 12 getting in free, and folks may purchase a three-day Fair Pass for \$33.

The Carnival Midway opens at 4 p.m. weekdays and at noon on Saturday, and entry into the carnival is a separate fee, with rides remaining open each evening as long as attendees want to ride.

All music shows in Anderson Music Hall will be taking place at 7 p.m., with Arts & Crafts available 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily through the last day of the Fair on Saturday.

For more information, including a complete listing of music shows and other activities, visit www.georgiamountainfairgrounds.com, where tickets may also be purchased in advance for these rain-or-shine events.



Kids are loving the carnival at the Georgia Mountain Fair, open daily beginning at 4 p.m. through Aug. 27.
Photo by Lowell Nicholson



District 8 State Rep. Stan Gunter was this year’s GMF Parade Grand Marshal, pictured here with Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw and local 9-year-old Eliza Barnes.
Photo by Lowell Nicholson



2022 Miss Georgia Mountain Fair Sarah Shook had fun tossing candy to youngsters lined up to watch the Fair Parade ride through Hiwassee Aug. 20.
Photo by Lowell Nicholson

Miss GMF Pageant...from Page 1A



2022 Miss Georgia Mountain Fair participants were (not in order pictured): Brenlee Kitchens, Carlee Moody, Ashley Bradburn, Abby Joyce, Sarah Shook, Emma Hyatt, Kylee Parker, Ivie Davenport and Karah Shea.
Photo by Lowell Nicholson

And after the judges finished their scoring, it was announced that the Second Runner-Up was Emma Hyatt, First Runner-Up was Kylee Parker, and the overall winner of 2022 Miss Georgia Mountain Fair was Sarah Shook.

For starters, Shook wanted to give “a big shoutout” to two of her biggest supporters, Darla Ward and Robyn Donaldson, who encouraged her to enter the pageant.

“It was way out of my comfort zone, and I have never been in a pageant before,” Shook said. “At first, I was overwhelmed, but it was great to do this and get to know more people and make connections and friendships with the other girls.”

“I would encourage anybody that is feeling like they can’t step out of their comfort zone to do so, especially when you have a supporting community like ours who will back you up before you (have to) go out into the real world and face real problems.”

“This is a great experience for me because a lot of it was symbolic in the way that it was like a job interview for how it will be in the real world and

having to talk in front of others. I was most nervous of speaking in front of such a large audience, but once I got out there and it was over with, I told myself, ‘Wow, I was stressing for no reason.’

“I just want to thank the community for backing me up and the other contestants as well in the pageant, and I look forward to working with everybody involved and being able to help our community and the Fairgrounds in any way that I can.”

In closing, Shook said she enjoyed everything about the pageant process and “would do it over again,” adding that the experience was “all about connecting with the others and all of us going out there with confidence in ourselves.”

“I will encourage anybody that may be nervous about something to just go for it with no regrets,” she said. “This is about more than just what is on the outside, because everybody is beautiful on the inside whether they believe it or not.”

Crowning Shook that evening was 2021 Miss Georgia Mountain Fair Runner-Up Emily Byers of Union County, who was happy to return to

bestow the honor on the new queen.

Of course, it is a time-honored tradition for the previous year’s Miss Georgia Mountain Fair to place the crown on the newly coronated queen. Unfortunately, 2021 winner Corrina Luckenbach was unable to attend because she was quarantining that evening with COVID-19.

“This year has been the most wonderful journey,” Luckenbach said of her experience as Fair royalty. “Being Miss Georgia Mountain Fair gave me both the opportunity and confidence I needed to serve my community fully, and I loved every minute of it.”

“I am so thankful of my time and even more thankful that such a wonderful young lady is stepping into her time as queen. I know that each girl, year after year, that takes this role on will feel the same way as I do about the crown: honored.”

For more information on all current and upcoming events at the Fairgrounds, including a complete schedule for the remaining days of the Georgia Mountain Fair through Aug. 27, visit www.georgiamountainfairgrounds.com.



Serving as additional entertainment during the Miss Georgia Mountain Fair Pageant Aug. 18 was the Star Dancers Team out of Hayesville, North Carolina.
Photo by Lowell Nicholson