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Local leaders to observe 'Patriot Day' Sept. 10

By Mark Smith
 Towns County Herald
 Staff Writer

The City of Hiawassee will join the Towns County Fire Department and others this weekend to honor and remember those 2,977 innocent victims who were brutally murdered on American soil by 19 Islamic suicide terrorists in a multi-pronged surprise attack on Sept. 11, 2001.

Everyone from the public is invited to attend the roughly 45-minute commemoration, which will take place on the Hiawassee Town Square this Saturday, Sept. 10, starting at 9:45 a.m.

Often referred to as "9/11," that fateful day 21 years ago bore witness to four heinous attacks coordinated in a plan hatched by militant al-Qaida terrorist Osama bin Laden using hijacked airliners full of passengers.

The Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York City were each struck by an airliner; one airliner crashed into the Pentagon in Washington, D.C.; and a final plane, meant to strike another government building to kill even more innocent people, crashed into a field in Pennsylvania when brave passengers stormed the cockpit and foiled the attack on that flight.

Not only did 2,977 people die in the immediate attack, but many others succumbed to ailments in later years as a direct result of the aftermath of the attacks.

"This will be our fourth year that we have done a tribute to Patriot Day, which is, of course, the tragedy of the 9/11 incident that happened 21 years ago. That's a full adult age," said Hiawassee Mayor Liz Ordiales, with emphasis.

"I think we need to keep

on the forefront that this was the worst tragedy that's ever happened in our nation. This wasn't a little attack. It was a concerted effort to hurt the United States, and some of these (younger) folks – even if you were in grade school, you probably don't remember.

"If you were 5 or 6 years old, you don't remember; you don't know any of this. So, I and my counterparts, (Young Harris Mayor) Andrea Gibby and (Sole Commissioner) Cliff Bradshaw, feel that it's very important for us as a community to keep this memory and this tribute alive.

"And the way we do that is with this event every year that we do on or around Sept. 11. This year it'll be on Sept. 10 because Sept. 11 falls on a Sunday.

"We're very fortunate to have the Appalachian St. An-

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Images like this one from the 9/11 "unattributed photographs" collection of the Library of Congress instantly evoke strong emotions in Americans everywhere.
 Courtesy of the Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

Towns Co. Fire Corps seeks community support

News Special
 Towns County Herald

The 12,000-plus residents of Towns County are blessed with the beauty and majesty of the North Georgia Mountains and Lake Chatuge. Beyond the pristine settings of the area, residents are also blessed with a cadre of dedicated First Responders, including the volunteer fire department.

These men and women of Towns County Fire & Rescue selflessly answer the call to provide help to citizens whenever an emergency arises, whether it involves a vehicular incident, house/wildfires, or rescuing people lost or injured in surrounding forests and the Appalachian Trail.

The Towns County Fire Department has six fire stations located throughout the county, each stocked with the equipment needed to provide emergency services. The webpage for the Fire Department, located at www.townscoun-



ga.org, lists the address of each station and the equipment stored there.

One of the two full-time employees of the Fire Department is Fire Chief Harold Copeland, and his office is part of Station No. 1 on Sims Circle in Hiawassee. While there are also a couple of part-time firefighters employed, most of

the 60 men and women who protect this community are volunteers.

The Towns County Fire Corps was chartered to raise money that can be used to buy items desired by the department that could not be purchased otherwise. Below is a list of some of the items purchased.

See *Towns Fire Corps*, Page 8A

Liquor store discussions continue in work session

By Brittany Holbrooks
 Towns County Herald
 Staff Writer

In the Aug. 29 Hiawassee City Council work session, business owners John and Becky Landress registered their disappointment with the council for not enacting a liquor store license moratorium sooner, as a third local package store is apparently in the works, to be located next to their businesses inside city limits.

Right now, the city's Alcohol Ordinance does not specify any limitations on how many package stores may open up shop in Hiawassee, meaning anyone who follows the application process spelled out in the ordinance may be granted a license to start a new business.

Recent feedback from the public, however, resulted in an Aug. 17 called council meeting to officially enact a moratorium on the issuance of new package store licenses, to remain in place up to Jan. 17, 2023.

Between now and then,



Local business owner John Landress attended the August work session of the Hiawassee City Council to protest the city's handling of liquor store licensing.
 Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

a newly formed committee will meet, review the ordinance for changes based on community feedback, and amend it pertaining to limitations, potentially setting a maximum number of licenses issued at one time and/or a minimum distance between

stores. A previous discussion about limitations took place in the May work session, when Mayor Liz Ordiales asked if the council wanted a moratorium to address such issues, but

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Hiawassee Pro Rodeo rides high despite rainy weather

By Jeremy Foster
 Towns County Herald
 Staff Writer

Another stomping good time was had Sept. 3-4 when the Hiawassee Pro Rodeo returned for the second time in 2022 to the lower baseball fields of the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds over Labor Day Weekend.

Rain made Saturday particularly muddy conditions overnight, with Sunday's outing requiring a weather delay to work the arena ground. And while attendance was lower night two, the event was still a success.

In a prelude to the action presented by Southern Rodeo Company out of Rockmart, riders on horseback rode around the arena in a patriotic display of the American flag, and local singer Summer Rahn stirringly performed "The Star-Spangled Banner" to commence the show.

Spectators were wowed by daring acts of agility and feats of strength by rodeo participants, seeing such traditional Western pastimes as bull riding, calf roping, steer wrestling



Hiawassee's own Alan Turpin competed in the Hiawassee Pro Rodeo over the weekend, pictured here expertly roping a calf.
 Photo by Lowell Nicholson

and more, all while enjoying numerous food and beverage vendor trucks and activities such as jump houses.

Professional saddle bronc rider Kody Rinehart of Rienzi, Mississippi, described his excitement for and love of the sport. Now 30, Rinehart

began riding broncs at 20 years old, and he is a two-time IPRA World Champion for 2020 and 2021.

"I got on my first bull when I was 16 and fell in love with the atmosphere of the rodeo, and I just stuck with it,"

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Master Blacksmith Ledford visits Movers & Shakers

By Jeremy Foster
 Towns County Herald
 Staff Writer

The Mountain Movers & Shakers once again broke bread at the Sundance Grill on Aug. 26, enjoying breakfast, coffee and community fellowship as they welcomed guest speaker Caleb Ledford, who is a Master Blacksmith.

A native, Ledford resides in Young Harris where he operates his blacksmithing business called "Ledford Works," the name of which was inspired by his former teacher Sabrina Garrett, who directs the Metal Fabrications Career Pathway at Towns County High School.

The TCHS Class of 2019 graduate is a studied welder and has achieved much success in his area of expertise, with his hard work having garnered him particular notoriety after competing not once but twice on the hit History Channel reality TV show, "Forged In Fire."

"Forged In Fire" is a competition-based series that tasks entrants with various timed challenges to see who



Towns County's own Master Blacksmith Caleb Ledford forged new connections at a recent meeting of the Mountain Movers and Shakers.
 Photo by Jeremy Foster

comes out on top in the end. Such challenges include crafting items such as a Roman Gladius, a Viking Battle Ax, a Bowie Knife, and literally every form of blade in existence.

Ledford, 21, got his start as a bladesmith nearly a decade ago, as a precocious young man of 12.

field was that I was just very fascinated with fire, making knives and things of that nature," Ledford said. "The whole process interested me a lot.

"I have gained a lot of experience so far through watching instructional videos, contacting and meeting people personally to ask questions

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City Work Session...from Page 1A

A majority of the council opted to stick with the original plan of allowing the market to decide.

That approach has led to the opening of two package stores already inside city limits, with another on the way, as a third license was applied for and granted before the Aug. 17 moratorium could go into effect.

It's not clear at present how much of a problem multiple liquor stores are for the rest of the community, but the Landresses were clear in their messaging that they do not approve of the way licenses are being issued according to the current Alcohol Ordinance.

The Landresses own Threadz Ink Printing, and Becky also owns Elevation Closet Exchange and Tanning. They're located at 347 Town Place, which hosts five - formerly six - shops in a retail building. With Carol's Floral Creations having moved to a new location in town, another business is moving in.

That business will be the third local package store, raising several concerns for the Landresses, with John adding that he wasn't sure how the third application met approval given what he described as an issue over specific liquor store space requirements at the retail building location.

"I appreciate the moratorium and that you're going to revisit the ordinance and amend as needed, but why couldn't that have been done in May or June or July's meeting?" John asked. "Why did it not happen until the special meeting on (Aug.) the 17th.

"Everybody here was well aware of it; long before any licensing was applied for, it was rumored that it was coming. It was brought to this council's attention, and it was compared to bait stores, hardware stores, or multiple gas stations or restaurants, to the likes of that.

"We all know liquor stores are very different than that. Our federal government regulates them, our state government regulates them.

"And my only objection is not to demand to cap off free enterprise, because we're conservative Republicans here, and we love free enterprise, right? But why can't we just make it to where they have to be in their own building?"

"Why do they have to be in a building that affects five other businesses that are in business in that complex right now with licenses issued by this office? And every one (of those businesses) will be affected by this liquor store, good or bad; we don't know how good, we don't know how bad, but we are going to be affected."

John went on to say that it wasn't fair to the existing liquor stores to keep allowing more stores to pop up, because they face heavy regulation that bait, convenience and hardware stores are not subject to, which means higher costs both to start up and maintain year after year.

"You're asking these businesses to pay \$3,000 for a license, (have) \$300,000 for inventory, annual license renewal ... and then you don't do anything at all to protect their investment that they're making into the city that they're residing in," John said.

He expressed further disappointment that, after having spoken previously with Councilwoman Nancy Noblet about her being in favor of amending the ordinance to keep liquor stores a mile apart - which would have prevented the current situation - nothing happened.

"Imagine my disgust, when we've put everything we've had into this business," John said. "We're 10 years old this past February - 10. It's hard enough to get a business to stay here a year, let alone 10. Not to mention we've expanded (by opening) a second store with my wife, right beside me, whose store will actually butt up to (the liquor store)."

Added John, "Underage girls that are coming in to tan and to buy clothes at an affordable price are going to be right there at a liquor store. As a father, I would not allow my daughters to go to a place like that ... I just don't see how any of that was not taken into consideration."

The Landresses cited safety concerns for their customers and businesses, too, as they believe the new package store will drastically change the environment in that area, increasing the likelihood of vandalism and other illicit activities putting properties and people in danger.

"How would you feel if your grandbabies played outside of your family-owned business, and this changed the entire demographic of the place and you had to explain why, now, they had to stay inside?" Becky asked, sharing also how she and John felt ignored and lied to by the council in recent months.

Importantly, John pointed out that "we're not against liquor stores ... but there's a place for a liquor store, and being beside a tanning salon, a hair salon and a screen printer doesn't make a whole lot of sense, because, usually, those kind of places are in their own buildings."

Councilwoman Amy Barrett, who spent the better

part of a year helping to draft the original ordinance, has been a strong proponent of the free-market approach governing how many stores could be supported in the community.

She said that, while she understood the viewpoints at hand, the trio of stores would be serving residents in neighboring counties as well and benefitting from the local tourism industry, and she believed property owners had a right to decide what to do with their property, including renting space to a liquor store.

Still, she and the other council members had agreed to reconsider the issue with an eye toward amending the ordinance.

"I understand and I feel your pain, and that's why we're also reviewing it and we're negotiating," Barrett said.

For her part, Councilwoman Noblet shared that she didn't think anyone on the council "really and truly" believed that more than one liquor store would come into the city.

"I am shocked that we got more than one liquor store," Noblet said, who voted to put the referendum before voters but did not have a hand in drafting the ordinance. "Actually, when the liquor went on the ballot - I'm not shy to say it - I voted no. I voted it down. I did not want liquor in our city."

With tensions flaring toward the end of the discussion, Ordiales stepped in to thank the Landresses for coming to the meeting and promised that talks would continue on the issue.

"Your points are very well taken," Ordiales said. "I love heated discussions because it always means you have a passion, and I like that."

Added Ordiales, "What I think we need to do going forward is address all those things. I agree with you that we need to have distance and population (limitations for package stores) - maybe we need to have both.

"But I'll tell you this: our biggest problem is, we do not have zoning. And until everybody gets on the same page about wanting to do what's right for our commerce, our businesses in the city, and put some kind of (commercial) zoning in place, we will have problems."

Noblet implored everyone with concerns about the city and the direction of its development to come to city meetings, which are open to the public and streamed live on Facebook.

Additional coverage from the Aug. 29 work session will be made available in the coverage of the Sept. 6 regular council meeting, which occurred after press time.

Patriot Day...from Page 1A

drew's Pipes and Drums from Blairsville that feature the bagpipes. Then we also have the North Georgia Honor Guard that will present the colors and play 'Taps' at the appropriate times during the ceremony.

"We will have, this year, Bill Renaldo singing the National Anthem, followed by an invocation by Pastor Steve Awtry of McConnell Baptist Church."

Young Harris Mayor Gibby will deliver welcoming remarks, and Towns County Fire Chief Harold Copeland will address the meaning of Sept. 11, followed by guest speaker retired U.S. Army Col.

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 Circle, 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(Sep7.A1)JH

are physically suffering from the after-effects of the attacks.

Also being recognized in Hiawassee are military veterans who live in the community. Ordiales said that 10 military members, active and veterans, are chosen every year for recognition on "Hometown Hero" banners, which will be on display for the 9/11 tribute.

Ordiales also mentioned that there is a tattered flag drop-off bin at City Hall that is accessible during regular business hours.

Georgia Mountain Writers Club meeting August 3rd



(L-R) front: Pat Miner, Nadine Justice, Willema Helton, Stephanie Holmquist, Connie Rosenberry, Mary Cone; back: Jim Miner, James F. Davis, Brenda Kay Ledford, Alan Cone, Jackie Volk, Jean Nethery, Franklyn Boulineau, David White

Georgia Mountain Writers Club wants to remind interested participants that we have a new meeting time and place! Our August meeting was held at the North Georgia Technical College on August 3. It was the first time in our new location, and everyone agreed the room met our needs very well. We had a large group with three new visitors, and lots of stories to share.

One suggested topic this month was would you rather go back in time and meet an ancestor or go forward in time and meet a descendant? Writers were given the choice of bringing something written before or sharing what they are working on.

Mary and Alan Cone both tackled the 'time travel' idea with very different results.

Mary considered going back in time to meet her ancestors, then on the advice of a forward thinking relative, she scrapped that plan to travel instead to the land of tomorrow.

Alan took a science fiction track. "Impressions on the Nature of Time" takes us to the Princeton offices of an elderly Albert Einstein. The professor receives a communication from a yet-unborn descendant that puts him in fear of the ultimate cosmic calamity.

Brenda Kay Ledford told the story of her 7 times great-grandfather, Dragging Canoe,

from the Wolf tribe. A ruthless warrior in his young years, he became an advocate for Native Americans in his later years.

Jackie Volk pulled a story from her files, titled, "Killing my little darlings." Writing is the process of editing and in this whimsical piece Jackie struggles with the process of removing those words that seem so perfect, but perhaps not necessary.

Nadine Justice shared a piece from the past called "Summer Solstice," an annual celebration of female friendships and why they are so important to women.

In "The Storm," Connie Rosenberry reminisced about the time she and her husband traveled to Texas to visit friends, only to discover a hurricane was bearing down on Tampa, where her 16-year-old daughter was home alone.

James F. Davis wrote about bizarre college English 101 writing assignments - and his humorous approach to explaining, for example, how an abstract sculpture at the university embodied its spirit written in the style of D. H. Lawrence or what the Sphinx in the Egypt desert was thinking about for the past 4,500 years.

Franklin Boulineau shared early memories, growing up as a country boy with memories of his father who was well loved and put food

on the table, in "Seining in Rita Creek."

David White read a chapter from the book he is working on about raising an autistic child. In this excerpt, Jordan, a toddler who is difficult to manage, is removed from his preschool and David and his wife begin to experience the isolation that follows.

Jean Nethery shared more of her travels in Africa with her husband, describing the abundant wildlife and their experiences on wildlife safaris.

Jim and Pat Miner each wrote the story of how they met, from their own perspective. Their stories, though almost mirror images, provided two lenses to view the same scene.

Our next meeting will be on the first Wednesday in September, September 7, at 10 AM at the North Georgia Technical College. Room 414 is found off the main entrance in Bldg A. To avoid the flight of stairs at that entrance, visitors can park in the back of the college and enter through Bldg E. From there walk straight ahead until you reach the room on the right, near the front doors. Suggested topics are: A Brave Act, An Embarrassing Moment, Labor Day, or My First Love. All readings should be kept to less than five minutes. Introductory comments also need to be brief so that all have time to share.

Hiawassee Pro Rodeo...from Page 1A



Barrel racing is a fast-paced rodeo spectacle that pits a rider and her horse against the clock.
Photo by Lowell Nicholson

Rinehart said. "I told some of my friends on the way up here that I love driving through where the Ocoee River is. I have a lot of memories of church camp and college student ministry going out there, and I just love these mountains."

"The people around here are awesome, and they love the rodeo also. Everybody wants to be a cowboy whenever they are growing up, and it is amazing to come here and perform and have everyone live vicariously through what we do."

Hiawassee native Dave Sligh is a former rider and performer, and this time he took to the stands as a spectator to watch with some of his family visiting from New York for the evening.

"I like coming back to rodeos to see how the traditions have progressed and watching the new and young riders learning and growing also," Sligh said. "This is a great crowd here tonight and one of my favorite sports; when I was a child, I grew up riding around here."

"I love the energy everyone has at the rodeo. I believe people love the rodeo because it is a live sport, and to me, it just defines American tradition. It's a wonderful thing. I hope it never goes away, and I wish there was more of it."

In the weeks leading up to the show, the family of Jerry Smith, who passed away in June, left a special message for those rodeo attendees. Smith owned and operated the Memory Lane Classic Car Museum as a charitable outlet for the community and was set to host the rodeo there.

"The rodeo will still go on at the Towns County, Hiawassee Fairgrounds," the family's statement said. "Jerry's wish was for the rodeo to go on and it will, just not sponsored by Memory Lane, but rather in memory of Jerry at the Fairgrounds."

"As one can imagine with just over a month of Jerry's passing, this was a tremendous emotional strain on the family regardless of the past plan-

ning and the event being paid for. We are so appreciative to the Fairgrounds for helping us fulfill Jerry's wishes and know that Jerry's memory and the rodeo will be in great hands."

"The outpouring of compassion from the Towns County community has meant the world to us. Please plan to go out and enjoy the event. Thank you to all that have supported Memory Lane Classic Car Museum."

Be sure to return to the Fairgrounds next week when the major tourist draw of the Dailey & Vincent's American Made Music Fest returns for another year running, "a three-day festival bringing together the very best in American music - Country, Bluegrass and Gospel music!"

The festival will feature multiple big-name musical acts and run between Thursday, Sept. 17, and Saturday, Sept. 19, with a compete talent lineup and ticket purchasing information available at www.georgiamountainfairgrounds.com.



The turnout was incredible for the Hiawassee Pro Rodeo over the weekend, with the event being dedicated to the memory of Jerry Smith.
Photo by Jeremy Foster

Towns Fire Corps...from Page 1A

urchased for the Fire Department by the Fire Corps between 2017-2021.

2017: six Zoll Automated External Defibrillators, \$7,868; Yamaha 6x6 for trail rescue and trailer, \$20,872; used boat motor for lake rescue, \$3,535.

2018: 23 helmet lights, 10 Bailout bags, 15 Channel-lock Rescue Tools for interior firefighters, \$3,954; mobile cascade system for air tanks, \$9,737; camper top for Utility 6, \$1,939; school fire awareness items, \$2,529; side-scan sonar for lake rescue, \$761.

2019: dive team wrist seals, 12 med bags, 12 tourniquets, \$2,399; digital radios for upgraded communications, \$34,908; lawn mower for station maintenance, \$2,426; underwater ROV system, \$3,148; ID photo printing system, \$2,008; dive team neck seals, \$600.

2020: trail litter for trail rescue, \$5,162; 21 med

bags, \$2,519; 104 tourniquets, \$3,118; seven Flir Thermal Imaging Cameras, \$3,594; station cascade system upgrade, \$7,148; two K12 saws, \$1,478.

2021: life safety rope, \$3,405; second Polaris for trail rescues, \$12,000.

The Fire Corps is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, so donations made to the Fire Corps are tax deductible.

Fire Corps funds cannot be used to purchase equipment or items that are specified by the federal government to be a functioning Fire Department. For example, if the county wanted to buy a fire engine truck that cost \$400,000 but only had budgeted \$375,000, the Fire Corps would not be able to provide the needed \$25,000.

The Board of Directors of the Fire Corps meets several times a year to review requests from firefighters across the Fire Stations. Each request is evaluated based on eligibil-

ity - i.e., is this something the Fire Corps is allowed to fund? - need, and whether the Corps has the funds.

When requests exceed the funds available, the Fire Corps deliberates to determine which requests are most important.

Over the years, the Fire Corps has tried several ways to raise money, including chili cookoffs, empty boot donations given by drivers at a stop light, and mail solicitations for tax-deductible donations.

During September of 2022, all property owners in Towns County will receive a postcard asking for donations to support the Fire Corps efforts so its members can continue to provide local volunteer firefighters with the tools they need to effectively serve the community, fight fires, and save lives and property.

Towns County Fire Corps Board of Directors, Lisa Barbanera, President.

Blacksmith Ledford...from Page 1A

who I knew were top-notch in their game, and being hands-on since day one, and certainly through trial and error."

His business, located online at www.ledfordworks.com, provides high-quality custom blades and features highly rated metalworking classes for people who want to try their hand at creating knives of their own. People can also check his website to see him compete on "Forged In Fire."

"Caleb's first appearance on the popular 'Forged In Fire'

competition premiered Wednesday, April 22, 2020, at 9 p.m. on the History Channel. It was a lot of fun, a ton of hard work and very challenging. He met a lot of great people and really enjoyed competing against some of the finest. The odds-on favorite to win, Caleb's handle broke during the final testing phase, and he finished as the runner-up. No doubt he will be back for revenge at some point!"

His second show taping premiered Jan. 19, 2022: "After taking down two other com-

petitors, Caleb went to the final round of 'Forged In Fire - Beat the Unbeaten.' It was close, and he gave six-time champion Ben Abbott a run for his money. But Ben made it win No. 7. Congratulations Caleb on another great showing!"

The Mountain Movers and Shakers is a grassroots nonpartisan civic organization that welcomes a new and interesting guest speaker from the community every Friday at 8 a.m. inside the Sundance Grill in Hiawassee.

Veterans donate supplies to Towns County Schools



(L-R): VFW Auxiliary President John J. Whalen, TCES Counselor Hailey Silvey, American Legion Auxiliary President Robin Halfon, and TCES Assistant Principal Latisha Usher

On Aug. 22, all of the veterans branches of the VFW Post 7807 Building in Hiawassee, including the VFW, VFW Auxiliary, The American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary, Sons of The American Legion and the Riders of The American Legion, donated school supplies to the Towns County School System.

This is a joint effort and an annual and ongoing program that consists of fundraising, buying and delivering much needed supplies to the teachers and students of this community.