

# Signs...from Page 1A

sign ordinance will be amended to prohibit the future installation of billboard signs altogether.

Citing concerns over disruption of scenic beauty and tourism, as well as studies showing that billboard signs "can have a negative effect on the local economy," Bradshaw has drawn up a survey asking people what they want him to do with billboards.

Already, dozens of business owners and residents have completed the survey. Given options like limiting

billboards to U.S. 76 with at least a mile between signs and "no more billboards - we have enough," the overwhelming response has been "no more billboards."

The commissioner also said that the amended county sign ordinance will still allow off-site signs, but the exact specifications of those signs have yet to be determined.

Once the county attorney incorporates any amendments into the sign ordinance, the commissioner will review

the amended ordinance and present it to the public for review and comment, hopefully by his regular county meeting in October.

"A hearing for public comments together with meetings for two readings and consideration of adoption of amendments cannot be scheduled before expiration of the moratorium," according to the Sept. 28 resolution.

Residents interested in picking up a copy of the commissioner's billboard sign survey can do so at his office in the Towns County Courthouse.

# PTSO...from Page 1A

raise funds for their various goodwill initiatives for needy students.

For example, when someone registers their Ingles customer card with PTSO, the organization gets a small percentage of whatever the cardholder spends.

She also described in detail many of the projects the PTSO has done in the past and is currently doing to enhance the education of Towns County students.

And \$14,000 may seem like a lot of money, but when calculated out, that's only about \$14.74 per student per year - not exactly an overwhelming amount in 2018 dollars.

"How can we get people to understand that we're not asking for a ton of their time?" asked Woods. "We just need help."

page and we're able to tag in through Stephanie Moss," said Barrett, adding that Moss is the school communications coordinator and will post PTSO information on the Towns County Schools Facebook page.

PTSO meetings are held the second Tuesday of each month at 3:30 p.m. in the administration room of the Towns County Elementary School, though sometimes they get going about 10 minutes early, said Barrett.

One of their endeavors is to raise money for high-achieving students to travel to out-of-state scholastic events in places like California, Arizona and Texas.

When asked how much they raise yearly, Barrett said they took in about \$14,000 in 2017, to which Woods added, "Every penny goes right back into the school. There's nothing that we keep."

Barrett said the PTSO loves to collaborate with other organizations, but they would love more than anything to get more parents involved.

With only eight parents in the entire school system of 950 students involved in PTSO, it's very difficult to make things work. And since the PTSO is not an official part of the Towns County School System, the organization is not allowed to use school resources.

Woods then changed gears to talk about protecting kids in the schools, saying that when the shooting happened in Parkland, Florida, "we really got energized in this community about protecting our kids."

"I think we need to take it a step further," said Woods. "I think we need to prevent school violence - start at the root of the problem, not wait until we have a gunman in our buildings."

"We have 950 students in all three schools," said Woods. "We have eight parents involved. To get the community involved, that's where we struggle. We have spent many nights talking about how we can get people involved."

"We can only reach out to the people that actually give us their information, so if they don't give us their information, we can't contact them," said Woods.

One thing the PTSO does use to increase its reach is social media, which helps them get the word out.

"One way that we could possibly do that is through the Sandy Hook Promise. The Sandy Hook Promise is a program that teaches education and awareness."

For more information on this program, go online to SandyHookPromise.org.

The big incentive, said Ordiales, is half a point off Georgia Environmental Finance Authority loans.

"Half of a point doesn't sound like a lot, but on a million dollars - that's a lot of money," said Ordiales.

In other news, Ordiales talked about a recent meeting she attended with local, regional and state stakeholders.

"We have worked on the plans for this facility for about two years, and construction started just last summer. We wanted an at-home feel so we can make sure our staff feels comfortable working in this new environment."

The organization also wanted a new central location to increase their credibility as a school system in the eyes of the public.

"A lot of our schools are in very small facilities," said Lovell. "Our Union County location is a shared building, and our White County location is two houses. When people see these locations, they are not really thinking we are an eligible school."

"Now, we have this main facility, and hopefully that helps people understand our seriousness as a school system, and our want to help these students get where they need to be in life."

They will also serve as a training location for the system's social workers and counselors.

"Every social worker and counselor that works with us has been trained in suicide intervention and prevention," said Lovell. "Now, we are bringing people in and we are training to make a huge difference in each student's life."

"We really want to help these troubled students and let them know we are here to make sure they thrive in their lives. They just need a group like us to be with them and assist them in their journey to graduation and overall adulthood."

The new facility will help MECHS to better implement its system goals and strategic plans, which in turn will further assist the many MECHS students in north Georgia with earning their high school diplomas.

Apart from being a meeting area, the new facility

# PlanFirst...from Page 1A

points on DCA programs; hands-on assistance from DCA staff; and other incentives as they are announced.



Hiawassee City Councilmembers Kris Berrong and Anne Mitchell on Sept. 24. Photo by Mark Smith

"We had a Hometown Connection here for the first time ever," said Ordiales. "A Hometown Connection is when the legislators come to your city and discuss your issues and what you'd like for them to take back to Atlanta when the (Legislative Session) starts."

Hometown Connection is a GMA brainchild, and officials from Hiawassee, Young Harris and Blairsville, as well as State Sen. John Wilkinson and GMA lobbyists who will promote municipal concerns for this area, were present. A few local business leaders also attended.

So, I asked them to see if there was any way to recalculate that so you can get more on traffic versus just having 11 miles."

Also on Sept. 24, the council held a called meeting to set the city millage rate to the rollback rate of 2.170 mills, which will mean \$174,605 in tax revenues if all taxes are paid.

consultation on what the city might do to reduce the high cost of electricity at city hall.

"I met with a solar energy guy today ... and he might have some pretty good options for us to do some solar paneling," said Ordiales.

"Basically, what we've asked them to do is look at how much money we get from the Department of Transportation Grant," said Ordiales. "It's only based on miles."

"Well, our city is 11 miles, but we have two billion people that cross those 11 miles.

A public hearing was also conducted that evening on the 2018-2019 Hiawassee Budget, which the mayor and council went through line by line.

In trying to find places to cut in the city budget, Ordiales said she met with a representative from a solar energy company for a

There is no doubt about the fact that the City of Hiawassee is on a very tight budget, and part of the problem stems from taxpayers who fail to pay their taxes in a timely manner.

After much discussion on the subject, Ordiales said she and the city attorney would be considering various, more severe penalties.

their services to those that attend the expo."

Local organizations joined the expo to let the community know their goals and upcoming events for the year.

The subject was airlifted to another medical facility with a trauma center, according to the Sheriff's Office.

After dropping him off at Chatuge Regional Hospital, Carter left in the male subject's Chevrolet Tahoe, according to the Sheriff's Office.

Organizations that attended included Habitat for Humanity, Rotary, Enotah CASA, and many other local nonprofits that wanted to share information or request membership from the community.

"We are here to inform the public about the upcoming events and make them aware of the problems we face as an organization," said Stephanie Brown, Advocate Supervisor for Enotah CASA. "With an increase of children needing our help, we need volunteers that can assist us in our programs."

Each of the vendors offered product demonstrations and discounts for the attendees of the event.

These vendors also hosted prizes for guests to earn during the duration of the showcase.

"This is a great opportunity for businesses to be a part of the community," said Lee. "Guests can get different prizes from visiting each booth, and this incentivizes them to talk to each business and learn more about their presence in the community."

Attendees also had the

opportunity to win \$200 from a drawing, which required that they visit specific booths and gain information from the business or organization before getting the stamp needed to turn in the tickets.

The booths for the tickets were selected based on their support of the event.

Food was provided by different vendors during the three-hour showcase.

"We have plenty of food for people to enjoy while they visit the businesses," said Lee. "We really want people to enjoy the event and better understand these business leaders."

This event runs annually, with plans to continue next year.

The facility can only hold a limited number of booths and businesses, which means that those wishing to participate again next year should probably go ahead and register for a spot in the showcase.

"We can only hold about 100 booths here due to the size of the facility," said Lee. "Those that want to set up at next year's expo can go ahead and register with us to ensure their place."

"All they need to do is call the chamber and we will put them on our list. We have grown since last year, and we hope to have more participants next year."

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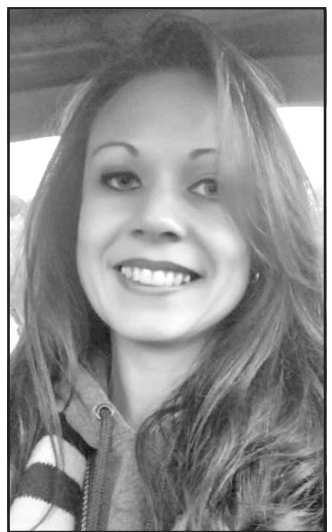
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# Carter still on the run; GBI continues to follow up on leads

By Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
Editor



Crystal LeAnne Carter

Crystal LeAnne Carter of Hiawassee has been on the run for nearly a month following a Sept. 8 shooting in which authorities have charged her with attempted murder and aggravated assault.

And though the Georgia Bureau of Investigation is continuing to run down leads concerning her whereabouts, she had yet to be apprehended as of press time Monday.

The latest information made public by authorities regarding the whereabouts of Carter, 37, indicated that she may be hiding out in Athens, though this information is going on two weeks old.

As previously reported, shortly after the alleged shooting incident, GBI investigators joined the Towns County Sheriff's Office in the hunt for Carter.

The vehicle was discovered later that night, abandoned in the parking lot of the Marathon station on Georgia 75 North in Hiawassee, according to the Sheriff's Office.

Detectives determined that Carter left the Marathon station in her own red Ford pickup, according to the Sheriff's Office.

Her truck was located on Sunday, Sept. 9, at a residence in Clay County, North Carolina, and investigators believe Carter could be hiding out in the area of Hiawassee and Hayesville, North Carolina, and now, Athens, Georgia.

The male subject survived the shooting and has been recovering at home, according to the Sheriff's Office.

Updates to this story will be published to townscounty-herald.net as they occur.

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# Voting...from Page 1A

In case people aren't aware, there is more than one way for a Towns County resident to vote.

There is the traditional way, where a registered voter travels to his or her precinct between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. on Election Day and casts their ballot.

However, registered voters also have the option to vote early at the board office, which will save a wait in line at the polls on Election Day.

Early voting in the 2018 General Election starts on

Monday, Oct. 15, and runs weekdays through Friday, Nov. 2.

During the three weeks of early voting, the board office will be open for voting Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., through lunch, and on Saturday, Oct. 27, from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m.

Registered voters may also choose to vote by absentee ballot. Any registered voter may request an absentee ballot.

The board office must receive a request for an absentee ballot in writing from the voter

for each election. Application forms are available at the board office and may be returned either by mail or personal delivery by the voter.

Absentee ballot applications may also be requested from the Georgia My Voter Page.

A U.S. citizen may register to vote at any time. However, the last day to register to vote in the upcoming Nov. 6 General Election will be Oct. 9. That goes for name and address changes as well.

The board office will be closed on Oct. 8 for Columbus Day.

# MECHS...from Page 1A



A special ribbon-cutting ceremony during the Grand Opening of the new MECHS Central Office in Cleveland on Saturday, Sept. 29. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

To solve this problem, the organization decided to build a Central Office where all the school leaders could gather and be close to each other.

"Now that we have a Central Office, I can walk across the hall or down the hall and get all the information I would need without having to set up meetings so far in advance," said Lovell. "We can work more efficiently to do better as a team, because we are all here in one location."

will also serve as a training location for the system's social workers and counselors.

"Every social worker and counselor that works with us has been trained in suicide intervention and prevention," said Lovell. "Now, we are bringing people in and we are training to make a huge difference in each student's life."

Many of the organization's board members and supporters gathered at the Central Office on Sept. 29 to appreciate the new site and enjoy the morning with their peers.

"This project took a lot of people," said Tracy Sanford, assistant superintendent at MECHS. "We could not have this facility without everybody that put in the effort."

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two years, and construction started just last summer. We wanted an at-home feel so we can make sure our staff feels comfortable working in this new environment."

The organization also wanted a new central location to increase their credibility as a school system in the eyes of the public.

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# Showcase...from Page 1A



A birds-eye view of the 2018 Business Showcase, which brought in plenty of people to fill the Towns County Recreation and Conference Center. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

Local organizations joined the expo to let the community know their goals and upcoming events for the year.

Organizations that attended included Habitat for Humanity, Rotary, Enotah CASA, and many other local nonprofits that wanted to share information or request membership from the community.

Each of the vendors offered product demonstrations and discounts for the attendees of the event.

These vendors also hosted prizes for guests to earn during the duration of the showcase.

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opportunity to win \$200 from a drawing, which required that they visit specific booths and gain information from the business or organization before getting the stamp needed to turn in the tickets.

The booths for the tickets were selected based on their support of the event.

Food was provided by different vendors during the three-hour showcase.

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