

# Towns County Herald

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## GMF security guard Harry Bates celebrates 88th birthday with friends

By Jarrett Whitener  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

The Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds threw a birthday party for longtime security guard Harry Bates on Wednesday, Sept. 30, where he celebrated with his friends and talked about his experiences over the years.

"I have been at the fairgrounds for 11 years, and I will keep going until I run out or until Hilda (Thomason) chases me out," Bates said. "I made maps for the Department of Defense for 42 years and served in Korea.

"After I retired back in '92, I went into painting and wallpaper for about 15 years.

I just couldn't sit still and had to have something to do. I've enjoyed my time, and I like it here."

Bates, who lives in the fairgrounds with his wife Pat, also helps tend the flowers there, which promotes the natural beauty of the area and adds a little flair for visitors.

As to how Harry and Pat arrived in Hiawasse, the couple spent some time moving around the Southeast before settling here, where they have enjoyed getting to know so many people.

"He is a people person, and that is a large part of it," Pat said. "The surroundings and everything are really pretty here. We lived in Missouri,

lived in Florida, and moved to Tennessee. We started out in a fifth wheel (camper).

"We moved to North Carolina and stayed there for a while, and Harry volunteered to help with the Fair and helped to fill that a while. When the (security guard) vacancy came up, we decided to do it, and Hilda called one day and told him to come and talk."

As for why they decided to throw him a birthday party last week, Fairgrounds General Manager Hilda Thomason said she wanted to recognize Bates for his dedication to security and leading by example.

"Harry is an awesome security guard here at



L-R: Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds General Manager Hilda Thomason, Pat Bates, Harry Bates and Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw at Harry's 88th birthday party on Sept. 30. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

## Early in-person voting begins Monday for General Election

By Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
Editor

Advanced in-person voting for the big Nov. 3 General Election will begin Monday, Oct. 12, and run weekdays through Friday, Oct. 30.

People are encouraged to vote early, as turnout is expected to be higher than ever this election, potentially translating to longer than usual precinct lines come Election Day.

Early voting will take place weekdays between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. at the Towns County Board of Elections & Registration Office in Suite A of 67 Lakeview Circle in Hiawasse next to the courthouse, and people will be



Three weeks of early voting begin Monday ahead of the big Nov. 3 General Election. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

able to vote there on Saturday, Oct. 24, as well.

Poll workers will be following COVID-19 best practices, including social distancing enforcement, regular equipment sanitation

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## Mustangs a big hit at Fairgrounds; Fall Craft Show this weekend

By Jarrett Whitener  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

The Northeast Georgia Mustang Club's 47th Annual Mustang Car Show revved into gear on Friday, Oct. 2, and Saturday, Oct. 3, at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds.

Club President Steve Harrison was excited to be at the fairgrounds for the first time and hopes to continue having the show at the venue in years ahead.

"We have been around for 30 years," Harrison said. "Jacky Jones and a bunch of his friends started the club, so this is our 30th anniversary. The first car show was at Chateau Elan, and we just had one there last weekend. We've got 140 members, and we do two car shows a year, one in Braselton and the other one here. Everybody here loves this venue."

"The club used to do three shows a year and we cut it down to two shows a year, and we are here permanently. I called Hilda (Thomason) after our show couldn't happen (at another venue) and asked if we



L-R: Georgia State Patrol Trooper Cody White, Jimmy Jones and Ricky Wilcox enjoying a nice fall day at the Northeast Georgia Mustang Club's car show inside the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds over the weekend. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

could have it here, and she said yes. This is the largest turnout of cars that we have had."

According to Harrison, one of the main factors in the Mustang's appeal is its longevity and the continuation

of the name over the years.

"Mustang has been around since 1964, and they are the only car that I know of that has been going ever since," Harrison said. "Mustangs are

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## Garden Club, PUP host yard sale

By Jarrett Whitener  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

The Hiawasse Garden Club partnered with Operation Prevent Unwanted Pets to host a three-day indoor yard sale at the Garden Club's clubhouse last month.

Joan Crothers enjoys membership in both organizations, and she helped to arrange the sale as a fundraiser for the groups, which have missed out on various opportunities due to COVID-19.

"The money goes to help the Garden Club, and for Operation PUP, it helps with the spay and neuters that we do," Crothers said. "This is an annual thing, and we always do a rummage sale."

"We like to have it in the spring when people come back



L-R: Joan Crothers and Sandy Hazen of Operation PUP enjoy volunteering for various local causes made possible thanks to generous support of the community. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

## Community worried about COVID, President Trump and division in country

By Jarrett Whitener  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

As fall rolls in and COVID-19 continues to remain top of mind for many, some of the focus of late has shifted to President Donald Trump, who announced early Friday that he and First Lady Melania Trump had tested positive for the virus.

The president has received lots of support since then, but he's also received his fair share of vitriol following the announcement, and Grace Short of Franklin, North Carolina, wasn't having any of it over the weekend.

"With the president in quarantine and in the hospital, I have seen a lot of disgusting comments online," Short said while shopping at North & Main on Saturday, Oct. 3. "People saying they want him to die and it would be a dream come true – that is just wrong."

"I'm not exactly a Trump supporter, but I don't wish the man to die of this terrible virus. We need to pray and hope he gets in good health. This doesn't just apply to Democrats or liberals or whatever. Republicans need



Hiawasse is a popular shopping destination, especially on the weekends when people are out and about more. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

to learn that, too.

"When (Ruth Bader Ginsburg) passed, I saw the same thing from people saying they were glad that she died, and that we are better off without her. I don't know when we became so hateful, but that needs to end. We aren't fixing any problems like this."

Elsewhere in the community, people are beginning to see results from all the precautions they've

been taking, including Paige Yarbrough of Rabun County, who feels that the masks and social distancing have helped with viral spreading in the area.

"It seems like everything is getting better," Yarbrough said on Inghat Saturday. "I don't know if that is because it hasn't been getting as much attention or if it is going away. I still see people wearing masks in stores and staying distant, and I think

See *COVID Concerns*, Page 8A

## Outbreaks improve in nursing homes; family visitations started Monday

By Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
Editor

being conducted at the local nursing homes.

Other long-term care facilities in the area have suffered outbreaks as well, including nursing homes in Fanning, Lumpkin, Rabun and Habersham.

Union County experienced only one new positive among nursing home residents last week, bringing the total number of residents testing for COVID to 102 of 118, or about 86% of the population.

Eleven people have died in connection with the Blairsville outbreak that began in mid-August, with the last resident died as of press time having occurred the week of Sept. 21.

As far as health care workers, as an additional 16 nursing home employees tested positive in Union last week, bringing the total number associated with this outbreak near 100, or more than 50% of nursing home staff.

Chatuge Regional Nursing Home in Towns picked



CHATUGE REGIONAL NURSING HOME

up an additional 18 resident positives last week, down from 26 new positives the week before; all told, 71 of 92 total residents have tested positive for the virus, or about 77% of the population.

Three residents have died in connection with the outbreak that began toward the beginning of September in the Hiawasse-based facility, with no new deaths occurring last week.

As of Friday, the Towns nursing home also featured 56 positive tests among employees, which is slightly under 50% of staff members there.

Most residents in both facilities have experienced either mild symptoms or were asymptomatic after testing positive for the coronavirus, and only one resident – from Chatuge – was hospitalized as of Friday.

"Chatuge is still early into their outbreak, so anything can happen there, and we do expect more asymptomatic

See *Nursing Homes*, Page 8A

## TCSO arrests burglary suspect after finding him inside Lakeview Store

News Special  
Towns County Herald

Towns County Sheriff's Deputies' quick response to a business burglary alarm during the early morning hours of Oct. 1 led to the arrest of Michael Anthony George, 26, of Cherokee, North Carolina.

When deputies responded to Lakeview Store on US 76 in Hiawasse Thursday morning, they discovered the front glass door had been broken out.

Upon further investigation, the suspect – later identified as George – was located inside. He was arrested without incident and charged with burglary and criminal damage to property.

All suspects are assumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law. The case will be forwarded to the Enotah Judicial Circuit District Attorney's Office for prosecution.



Michael Anthony George

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