

Upcoming 'Turkey Trot' to benefit Deputy Henderson

By Shawn Jarrard
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BLAIRSVILLE — Mitchell Henderson took a big step forward in his recovery last week, when he transferred to the world-renowned Shepherd Center in Atlanta.

And by all accounts, he's improving each and every day.

Henderson's family has been constantly by his side throughout this whole ordeal, and through them, the communities of Union and Towns counties have done their part to keep Henderson, a Union County Sheriff's deputy, in their thoughts and prayers.

Many have even made efforts to help Henderson by raising money for his recovery, to go toward his family's travel expenses and any medical needs Henderson may have on his journey of healing.

Seventeen-year-old Austin Urban, who is a senior at Mountain Area Christian Academy, knew he wanted to help when he heard a law enforcement officer in his community had been injured.

Urban has been paying attention to recent reactions around the nation concerning an increase in allegations of racially motivated shootings by police officers, and he felt a benefit for Henderson would be a good way to show his support for the deputy as well as all law enforcement officers in the community.

"I really felt led to do something, not just for Mitchell, but for the whole entire police force, to let them know that the community has their back and the churches have their back," said Urban. "Police officers have a community that loves them and wants to thank them."

The idea to host a 5K seemed a natural choice for Urban, whose cross country team just won their state championship.

So, after some discussion with his mom, Lisa Urban, who works at First Baptist Church of Blairsville,



The son/mother team of Austin and Lisa Urban are bringing the #239 Turkey Trot 5K & Prayer Walk to Meeks Park on Saturday, Nov. 19

the "#239 Turkey Trot 5K & Prayer Walk" was born.

The benefit will take place on Saturday, Nov. 19, just in time to show thanks for local law enforcement right before Thanksgiving.

Meeks Park, located at 490 Meeks Park Road in Blairsville, will host the Turkey Trot. Registration opens at 8 a.m. and the run and prayer walk begin at 9 a.m.

Participants can pre-register now for \$25 at active.com, which also secures for them a T-shirt, and folks can register the day of the race for \$30, with a chance to nab a T-shirt while supplies last.

Race proceeds will go toward the "Mitchell Henderson Benefit Account," to help with expenses related to Deputy Henderson's recovery.

The mother-and-son Urban team have been working to organize a world-class race for Henderson, and they are still seeking sponsorships.

In order to have time to print sponsor names on the backs of event T-shirts, they

are asking that sponsorship forms be filled out and returned no later than Nov. 1.

There are three different sponsorship levels for having names printed on the backs of shirts — \$100, \$300 and \$500.

Of course, people can also just donate whatever they can afford. All checks should be made payable to "Mitchell Henderson Benefit Account," and can be mailed to First Baptist Church, 296 Blue Ridge St., Blairsville, GA 30512.

The Urbans are hoping for a strong community turnout for the #239 Turkey Trot 5K & Prayer Walk. This is their first time organizing an event like this, but they've had plenty of positive feedback so far, and look forward to having the race professionally handled by Classic Race Services.

Austin will be joined that Saturday by his fellow MACA Cross Country runners and their coach, and the Union County Sheriff's Office told the Urbans that they will have representation at the race.

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current course load.

"The fourth-graders we started in August with a terrarium project," said Smith. "The science teacher at the time was teaching on ecosystems. So, I came in and talked about what a terrarium is and how it is its own surviving ecosystem in a jar."

"I assigned a project to the kids to make one if they wanted to. Anything that will require the student to spend money is an optional thing."

To make things more interesting for the students, Smith held a terrarium contest for those who decided to participate in the project, allowing for extra incentive to both learn and have a good time while doing so.

According to Smith, an astounding 67 percent of fourth-graders participated in the project, and seemed to have a real interest in not only the 4-H program but also the learning opportunities that coincide.

"Our fifth and sixth-graders are wrapping it up right now for their care package project," said Smith. "Just this week, I collected all the items that the students had brought into the schools. Everything that I pulled out of the box just made me a little bit happier. These kids really took it seriously."

"I gave them a list of items that soldiers would like to receive in care packages. Again, I said that they didn't have to buy anything. Soldiers love pictures and notes too."

"One of the students had written a stack of notes. I was reading all of them and almost cried sitting at my desk. I'm



Bayza Smith, a seventh-grader at Towns County Middle, spoke to the Mountain Movers and Shakers about Tourette's syndrome, delivering a speech she initially gave at the conservative group's yearly public speaking contest

so excited because they're all taking it so seriously."

Smith only recently began the seventh and eighth-grade 4-H program last week, calling an interest meeting for the first time this school year. Unlike the fourth, fifth and sixth-graders, the program is an extracurricular for those who are in the seventh grade or higher.

"I'm looking forward to getting those kids involved and starting up community service projects," said Smith. "The seventh through 12th-graders is where we get in the community and really try to pick areas where we can develop a project to help someone else out."

As of right now, the fourth, fifth and sixth-graders are working on writing speeches to be graded and presented in the coming weeks. While public

speaking is a huge aspect of the 4-H program, this particular project is a requirement that will contribute to their overall grade point average as well as hit countless Georgia Performance Standards that students must accomplish by the end of the year.

"The energy is definitely there," said Smith. "These kids are coming right along, and I'm very excited about where we're headed."

"4-H is led almost completely by volunteers and almost completely by donations. So, if there is even any way that you think you can help in either of those areas, feel free to reach out and we can see how involved we can get you."

"I'm looking forward to getting this up off the ground and seeing where this next year takes us."

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your hometown."

Those who attended the meeting, which was led by Young Harris Mayor Andrea Gibby, participated by giving their input that will become part of the official survey.

The mayor asked residents what it was they liked about Young Harris, which garnered answers such as the overall feeling of respect people had for each other, the college, plus the small-town feel of the city.

Responding to what were some of the city's weaknesses, some felt there was a general lack of business, too many unsightly buildings, and not enough involvement from residents.

The active room then determined that there was plenty of potential for economic development, and that to get there, perhaps they should analyze the demographics of the city, and find ways to better promote Young Harris.

Residents looking to get their hands on a copy of the survey can inquire at Young Harris City Hall.

Following the public meeting on the 2016 Comprehensive Plan Survey, the mayor met with the Young Harris City Council to hold the regular monthly meeting for October.

In the meeting, the council decided to set the 2016 millage rate at the advertised rate of 2.965.

Also, discussion continued on the proposed student housing building to be developed by Provident Group for use by students of Young Harris College. For months the project has been plagued with administrative difficulties due to the need to acquire a special height variance, and the council continues to work



Dr. John Kelley of the Young Harris City Council



The Young Harris City Council met for several hours on Tuesday, Oct. 4, to discuss matters important to the city. Regular meetings are always the first Tuesday of the month, starting at 7 p.m.

month after month toward the eventual development of the project.

A planned discussion of the recently proposed and newly drafted ethics

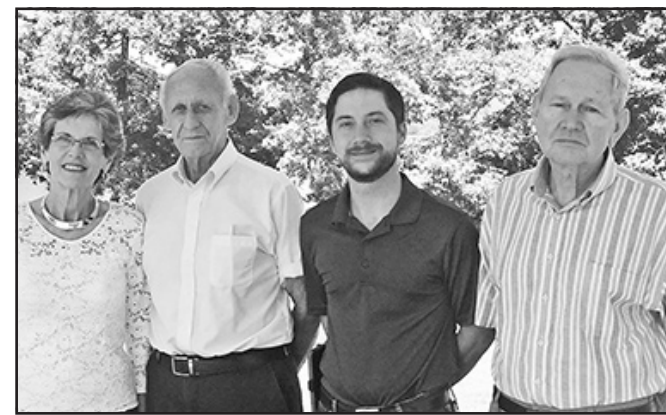
ordinance was tabled until the November regular meeting, as not everyone on the council received an advance copy of the ordinance prior to the meeting.

NGTC now offering free GED classes in Towns County

North Georgia Technical College is now offering free classes to those interested in studying for the GED at the learning center located at the Old Recreation Center in Hiwassee. In collaboration with Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall, NGTC now offers preparation courses for anyone who would like to get their GED. This is the first time NGTC has offered classes in Towns County since 2008.

"We can help you prepare for the GED test, a college entrance test, or just improve your basic skills," said NGTC Dean for Adult Education Shelby Ward. "Our program is designed for people who have different needs, backgrounds and skill levels. We provide a full range of services for adults who want to improve basic reading, math and English."

Wayne Clements is the instructor at the learning center and also teaches a GED class at the Towns County Detention Center.



L to r: Bobbie Lerdon, Bill Kendall, Curtis Brown, Wayne Clements

Commissioner Kendall was present to congratulate Curtis Brown, one of the first residents to receive their GED from the learning center, on his latest accomplishment. "This is a supportive atmosphere," said Dean Ward. "The students feel positive because they believe in their future possibilities."

"Thanks to NGTC and Dean Ward, we are so excited to have GED/College Prep Program back in Towns

County," said Bobbie Lerdon, Towns/Union GED advisory board member. "This is a great service to our community."

The center, located at 900 Main Street North in Hiwassee, is open from 4-7 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays. For more information or to register for classes, call 404-428-6758. For more information regarding NGTC classes and programs, visit northgatech.edu.