

Towns County Herald

Legal Organ of Towns County

www.townscountyherald.net

Your Hometown Newspaper Since 1928

75 Cents

Publication Number 635540 Volume 96 Number 01

Wednesday, October 30, 2024

Mountain Scene Farms earns state heritage award

By Brittany Holbrooks
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

The mountains of North Georgia have been dotted with farms for generations, but not many people can say their farmland has been maintained by the same family for a century or more.

Frank M. Riley Jr., Executive Director of the Chastate-Chattahoochee Resource Conservation and Development Council, is one of those rare people.

At the Georgia National Fair Oct. 9, Towns County's very own Mountain Scene Farms of the Brown/Riley family was recognized by the state with a Georgia Centennial Family Farm Award. There to receive the honor was Riley's mother, Sarah Brown Riley, who turned 100

this year.

The award is for farms that have been in the same family and in farming operation continuously for 100 years or more. Riley's farm has been in his family for 167 years, ever since his mother's great-uncle bought it in 1857.

The farm's history dates all the way back to 1813, when James Rutherford Wyly Sr. set out to build "houses of entertainment," or inns, along the Unicoi Turnpike.

Wyly, known for having built the Unicoi Turnpike in the early 1800s, was the first owner of the property – long before it became known as Mountain Scene Farms – and won it in the land lottery.

He constructed a house on what is now Georgia 75 near Mt. Zion Baptist Church, using handcrafted bricks

shaped with local clay. Following Wyly's death, the house and property were sold to successful farmer and landowner Ezekiel Brown in 1857.

Brown and his family moved from Cherokee, North Carolina, to Towns County, and their family's history has run alongside that of the land now for more than 150 years.

Although the old house Wyly built burned down in the 1980s, Riley's great-grandmother's house, constructed in 1892, still stands and is used today as a seasonal retreat for the family.

Riley says that, in all, the land has only been owned twice since the land lottery – once by Wyly, and then when it came into his own family.

"Not many families can make a claim like that," See *Mountain Scene Farms*, Page 6



Members of the Brown/Riley family accepting the prestigious Centennial Family Farm Award for Mountain Scene Farms at the Georgia National Fair earlier this month. Photo/Submitted

Towns County No. 1 in statewide voter turnout



Early in-person voting runs now through Friday, so get out and vote! Photo by Shawn Jarrard

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

This is the last week to vote early in the 2024 General Election, which continues to see record-breaking turnout heading into the final stretch.

Georgia is considered a "battleground state" in this year's presidential election, and voter enthusiasm remains incredibly high – nowhere

more than in the North Georgia Mountains.

With 58.36% of the local active electorate having voted through Saturday, Towns County handily claimed the No. 1 spot in the state in turnout percentage over the weekend. That's more than 6% above second-place Rabun County.

Among the other 158 counties in the state, Rabun,

Dawson and Union were neck and neck in turnout after Saturday, with a spread of just 0.11% separating the three near the second-place ranking.

These are very high turnout rates, always the case in the North Georgia Mountains. Comparatively, statewide turnout through Saturday was 38.7%. Still, nearly 2.8 million Georgians had voted

See *Early Voting*, Page 2

Tragic car wreck claims life of 1-year-old child

By Becky Long
Clay County Progress
Publisher

HAYESVILLE, N.C. – A 1-year-old child described by loved ones as the "heart and soul of his entire family" died Saturday, Oct. 19, after he was involved in a two-car accident on Highway 64 late that morning.

After the accident, Zion Amari Charles, of Murphy, was transported to Erlanger ER where he succumbed to his injuries, according to N.C. Trooper Charlie Cheeks.

Zion was riding in a child restraint seat in a 2002 Toyota Camry driven by his mother, Jasmine Rose Dills, and traveling with his father, Taevion Charles, a passenger in the front seat.

The accident occurred at about 11:30 a.m. when Dills was traveling west toward Murphy. Her Toyota ran off the right side of the road and

she over-corrected, crossing the centerline into the path of a 1987 Ford F250, according to Cheeks.

The pickup was driven by Hayesville resident Harry Watts Wells, who was initially transported to Erlanger ER, transferred to Chattanooga and released later the same night.

Zion's mom and dad were air-flighted to Northeast Georgia Medical Center, and both were released later that night.

"Zion was a daddy's boy from the moment he was born and his mom's little snuggle buddy," his family wrote in his obituary. "Zion had the sweetest smile and most adorable laugh that would simply melt your heart and ensure he got his way."

They went on to describe him as a "happy, yet still mischievous little boy who got into his parent's things, but that smile always won out over



Zion Amari Charles

them getting mad. Zion was a smart little boy, and his parents cherished each and every moment they had with him."

Services for Zion were held Sunday, Oct. 27, in the chapel of Ivie Funeral Home in Murphy.

A GoFundMe page has been set up by Zion's aunt Tiffani Johnson to help with expenses associated with

See *Fatal Wreck*, Page 10

Bradshaw conducts variety of business in busy meeting



Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw welcomed Towns County Retired Educators Kathrin Hunter, Paige Marlow and Donna Howell to his Oct. 14 meeting for a proclamation declaring Nov. 3 to be Retired Teachers Day. Photo by Shelly Knight

By Shelly Knight
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw's regular monthly meeting on Oct. 14 featured an amendment to the County Code of Ordinances, presentations, a proclamation, discussions on property taxes

and values, and a courtroom packed with members of the public.

In regular business, Bradshaw signed a resolution to amend the property setback measure, for which he held a public hearing immediately before the regular meeting.

"Towns County Building Inspector Michael Denton

brought this to my attention," Bradshaw said. "We have two different setbacks: one for in a subdivision of 25 feet and then any building outside a subdivision for 20 feet.

"It doesn't make sense for us to have those two different. We will change it so that all builders know the setback

See *County Meeting*, Page 5

Project Chimps leads off 2024 Halloween season



Children and chimps alike are curious creatures, and Project Chimps provides ample opportunities for the two to trade smiles, most recently during Chimp or Treat over the weekend. Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

By Brittany Holbrooks
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

There are several area Halloween options for families this week, including the annual trick-or-treating extravaganza known as "Fang-tastic Halloween" at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds.

This event will take place on Thursday, Oct. 31, from 5-8 p.m., with a Nov. 1 rain date.

People can also get in on major candy action at the

Nottely Marina in Blairsville, which will be open for three days, Oct. 29-31, with festivities kicking off each evening around 5:30 p.m. Parking is limited at the marina, so guests are asked to carpool if possible.

Scaring up the spooky season early with a Halloween "dress rehearsal" was the 2024 "Chimp or Treat" event, where monkeying around was the name of the game at Project Chimps, the nonprofit chimpanzee sanctuary in Mor-

ganton.

This year, Chimp or Treat fell on Oct. 26 and 27, and as part of a collaboration between Project Chimps and a handful of regional businesses, families were welcome to periodically stop at tents placed along a walkway running around the chimps' villas and their outdoor enrichment area.

Along with getting some bags full of candy and little toys, the educational aspect for attending families and

See *Chimp or Treat*, Page 10

14 Pages

Vol. 94 No. 01

Lake Levels

Arrests - 5
Church - 8
Classifieds - 13
Opinion - 4

Legals - 13
Obits - 9
Sports - 12

Blue Ridge 1,671.03
Chatuge 1,919.43
Nottely 1,764.50



NOTICE NOTICE NOTICE

Next week's newspaper delivery will be one day late to accommodate Nov. 5 Election Results.



You work hard for your money. Shouldn't it be working hard for you?

BRANDON GRIMSLEY | CFP®

HIAWASSEE | 214 North Main Street | 706-435-1116

Securities and advisory services offered through LPL Financial, a registered investment advisor and broker-dealer (member FINRA/SIPC). Investment and insurance products are not FDIC insured, are not bank guaranteed, and may lose value.



Georgia Mountain Writers Club September meeting



(L-R) back: Lane Eaton, Ginny Valletti, James F. Davis, Jackie Volk, Fred Teagle, Alan Cone, Jim Miner; front: Jean Nethery, Harriet Trippe, Franklyn Boulineau, Connie Rosenberry

The September meeting of the Georgia Mountain Writers Club resulted in lots of laughter as participants shared stories of past happenings, future fears, and present experiences. Our suggested topics were Technology, The Getaway, and Childhood mishaps. Most of the stories were about personal experiences that in present day light were more humorous perhaps than the actual experiences. As they say when things go wrong, "Someday this will make a great story!"

James F. Davis' story of the birth of his son was just such a tale. He recounted the tense and life-threatening but ultimately hilarious narrative of the birth.

Jean Nethery, in her story entitled "Getting Cold Feet" tells of her misadventures while dog-sledding in sub-zero weather in northern Minnesota. Her cold weather experiences had us laughing as we envisioned the dogsled dumping her on the ice and her husband sitting in the runaway dogsled while the guides tried to catch it. Her cold weather experience convinced her that a trip to Antarctica was not likely to happen.

Fred Teagle also produced lots of giggles as he read a story about the stupid things husbands do in "A Fool to his Folly, or The Forgotten Birthday Present."

On a more serious note, Franklyn Boulineau entertained us with his poem entitled, "A Killing Frost." His words evoked images of Halloween pumpkins, a falling rainbow of leaves, and cool frosty mornings.

Harriet Trippe shared a beautiful essay titled "Be Careful What You Wish For," written by a former student describing the impact her favorite English teacher (Har-

riet) had on her life. This troubled teenager who was headed nowhere is now a successful woman. The two have remained close.

Jackie Volk shared a travelogue written in the form of a letter called, "Dear Margie," in which she recounts a two-week European river cruise through Germany and the highs and lows of traveling—sore feet, beautiful scenery, new friends, and crowded airplanes.

Pat Miner read "My friend, Marucha." Marucha went from being a trainee as a Red Cross volunteer, to becoming Pat's right and left hand at the organization. Little did Pat know when they met, that this vivacious Cuban lady would become like a sister. It took an emergency which has lasted for two weeks to realize how strong the relationship has become.

Jim Miner's "One - Armed Beebe and the Cribbage Board," revealed tales of games and a family gathering after a funeral.

Lane Eaton read two excerpts from his book, "Georgia Park Experiences." Life as a park ranger can go in many directions. When a hurricane threatened, getting people to leave seemed simple enough, except for the stubborn ones. When one group insists on riding it out, Lane has to insist they shelter in the rest rooms. When the storm is over the park rangers truck lies under a couple of trees, a concrete picnic table has been shattered. But the campers' van somehow survives.

Rick Sapp shared "Life in miniature." Using beautiful language to describe the scenes beneath the tropical water's surface, Rick takes us on a scuba trip exploring the life of fish in an Eat or Be Eaten world. In his piece we observe

how the little Guppy uses the coral reef for protection and as his hunting grounds.

Using the Technology prompt, Ginny Valletti wrote "Gadget Guy Insanity," the story of Google taking over and managing your life until the internet goes down and everything turns to Nothing!

Connie Rosenberry's Technology@\$\$*! begins as she bemoans the fact that her phone and computer need to be replaced by more up-to-date devices. Amidst flashbacks of earlier times when she was supposed to be tech savvy, she now feels like the village ID10T (spelling intentional) as she checks out the new offerings. (In her day, "I D 10 T" was code between techies for a simple problem to fix, such as the printer wasn't plugged into the computer which is why it wasn't printing.)

Mary Cone's memoir piece "Mohawk," was from the prompt, "The Get Away." The rental cabin manager at the Cone family's remote Rocky Mountain vacation spot had a Mohawk haircut, a .45 caliber pistol and a hidden agenda. Would they make it out alive?

Alan Cone also used "The Getaway" prompt in "The Canonization of Rocket the Wonder Dog," in which an unlovable construction site watchdog becomes an inadvertent hero.

Our November meeting will be on Wednesday, Nov. 6 at the North Georgia Technical College at 10 AM. Suggested prompts are Stupid Husbands (suggested by one of the men in our group), Wrong Turn, Rules are made to be broken, or a quote by Jerry Seinfeld, "There's no such thing as Fun for the Whole Family."

Questions about our group can be directed to Connie Rosenberry at connie.rosenberry3@gmail.com.

Early Voting...from Page 1

as of Oct. 26, with 2024 General Election early voting continuing to break records closing in on Election Day.

Election Day is Tuesday, Nov. 5, and the in-person early voting period of three weeks concludes after this Friday, Nov. 1.

All in-person early voting takes place from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. inside the Towns County Civic Center, located in the same building as the Elections Office at 67 Lakeview Circle in Hiawassee.

General Election voters who decide to wait until Election Day to cast their ballots will need to head to their pre-determined voting precincts between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. on Nov. 5.

Towns County has two voting precincts: the Hiawassee Precinct at the Civic Center and the Young Harris Precinct in the Lodge Hall Building at 135 Murphy Street.

The deadline to register to vote in this election was Monday, Oct. 7, and the deadline to request an absentee-by-mail ballot was Friday, Oct. 25.

Absentee ballots can be returned using the official Elections Office drop box during early voting hours; mailed back in plenty of time to be counted after polls close on Election Day; or dropped off at the Elections Office through 7 p.m. Election Day.

Residents may visit <https://mvp.sos.ga.gov> for mail-in application and ballot status, poll location, registration information on file with the county, sample ballots for upcoming elections, provisional ballot status and more.

As this is a presidential election year, voters will be choosing the next president of the United States as well as several state positions, but there are no contested county-level seats up for grabs in the 2024 General Election.

Voters will also be deciding the fate of a state Constitutional Amendment to cap annual property assessment increases for taxing purposes.

If passed, the proposed constitutional amendment would create a new homestead exemption to cap assessment increases on homesteaded properties at 3% annually beginning on Jan. 1, 2025.

State lawmakers enabled the referendum this year by passing House Bill 581 and

House Resolution 1022, with an "opt-out" provision for local governments.

The proposed cap comes as welcome news to many homeowners, who have seen the values of their properties rise dramatically in recent years due largely to an inflated real estate market driven by COVID-19 pandemic-era relocations to the area.

For homes receiving the exemption starting next year, 2024 would stand as the base-year assessed value. Moving forward, the home would then reflect two values: the homesteaded value that is capped for taxing purposes, and the actual fair market value as it changes over time.

"The base year value may increase each year up to the inflationary rate determined by the State Revenue Commissioner, which may utilize the Consumer Price Index," according to information from the Association County Commissioners of Georgia.

So, annual values could increase from north of 0% to the 3% cap for homesteaded properties, though assessed values would still be subject to accounting for "substantial property changes," which could result in increases or decreases in value depending on what has changed.

If a homestead-exempted property is subsequently sold, then the base-year assessed value for the new homesteader would be set at the assessed value for the year immediately preceding the sale.

A homestead exemption reduces the amount of property taxes a homeowner owes on his or her legal residence, and according to ACCG, "this new floating homestead exemption is in addition to and not in lieu of all non-floating homestead exemptions."

HB 581 also creates a new 1% local option sales tax that could be imposed for property tax relief. But for the new tax to be put in place, it would have to be supported by voters in a local referendum.

The bill does several other things related to property and sales tax reform, such as improving the sales ratio study methodology by the Department of Audits and Accounts, removing confusing tax estimates from annual assessment notices and more.

General Election ballots

also feature a statewide referendum on raising the amount of tangible personal property tax exemption from \$7,500 to \$20,000. If passed, state law would be amended effective Jan. 1, 2025, to apply to all tax years beginning on or after that date.

State Rep. Mike Cheokas (R-Americanus) sponsored the bill that created this referendum, saying, "I hope this will be the first step in reducing the burden of high taxes and prohibitive regulations that adversely affect businesses in Georgia."

Proponents of these measures believe they would provide much-needed taxpayer relief in an era of prolonged inflation, while opponents have expressed concern that they could make it more difficult to raise revenues needed to effectively operate local governments and school systems.

Another Constitutional Amendment appears on ballots to ask voters whether they want to create a Georgia Tax Court, which would change the jurisdiction for settling tax cases from the executive branch of state government to the judicial branch of state government.

All but one state legislator supported the measure at the Georgia General Assembly this year, with proponents arguing the change would enable a separation of powers in matters of taxes and streamline the appeals process, which currently runs through Fulton County for all such matters.

Election results will be available in an insert in the Nov. 6 newspaper and online at <https://www.townscountyherald.net/> and the Towns County Herald Facebook page.

Whiskers Project Pumpkin Roll Fundraiser!

To order your delicious, homemade pumpkin roll, please visit whiskersproject.org or call 1-888-872-9330. The roll serves 8 and can be delivered in Union and Towns County. Last order date and delivery date is November 15th. These fresh rolls are \$25 and will help fund our spay neuter program for feral cats. For 21 years, Whiskers Project has spayed and neutered over 3,000 cats. We would not be able to do what we do without your donations! Please spay and neuter your pets and lets stop litters and homeless animals.

706-745-6343

Printing Company

Forms?.....YES

Business Cards?....YES

Labels?.....YES

Signs?.....YES

Blueprints.....YES

Name Badges.....YES

Custom Note Cards...YES

Invitations.....YES

Letterhead.....YES

Envelopes.....YES

And MORE!

Need Blueprints?

Scan and Print, or Scan and Email services available

Your Hometown Printer since 1975

See Allison or Kenneth

Same building as the North Georgia News

266 Cleveland St. • Blairsville

County Meeting...from Page 1



In the October county meeting, Parks & Rec Director Stuart Parks went over impressive statistics regarding youth involvement in local recreation programs. Photo by Shelly Knight

is 20 feet and there's no confusion."

Parks and Recreation Director Stuart Nichols spoke in the meeting, confirming the popularity of several department programs and plans for improvement.

Nichols highlighted the return of tackle football, noting that "we grew the football program substantially."

"Last year, counting cheerleaders, we had 109 kids, and this year we had 126," he said.

Similarly, basketball signups are going well, and he has been "working with and building a relationship with Young Harris College and

their volleyball program" in hopes of offering rec volleyball in the next year or two.

The Rec Department also offers a popular golf clinic, in addition to tennis, and there are "plenty of classes for adults as well," such as yoga, aerobics, basketball and Tai Chi.

"We've been working for the last 18 months with National Park Service on a grant for a splash pad and a community pavilion with public restrooms on site at the beach area," Nichols said. "The grant offers \$158,000 in matching funds."

"I know everywhere these splash pads go in, they

are very popular. They do not require a lifeguard as there is very little risk of drowning. Our timeline for this is to have both in place by next spring."

Nichols is also looking ways to involve kids who are not athletes, like media creation for the newspaper and social media.

Bradshaw presented a Retired Educators proclamation, welcoming and thanking Donna Howell, Katherin Hunter, and Paige Marlow of the Towns County Retired Educators for their outstanding contributions to local education.

He read a proclamation from the state that names Nov. 3 to henceforth be known as "Retired Teachers Day" in Georgia before designating the same for Towns County.

Toward the end of the meeting, Bradshaw introduced Tax Commissioner Michael Anderson to "come and explain what Gov. Kemp did to help people" regarding their property tax bills in 2023.

"Last year, the state legislature and Gov. Kemp passed a homestead grant so everyone in the state received a refund on their homesteaded property," Anderson said. "Even though the television said everyone would receive \$500, the refund was based on the millage rate. And as everyone knows, (in) Towns County, our mill rate is one of the cheapest in the state."

Anderson explained that this homestead grant meant that property owners received a maximum amount of \$193.28 off their tax bill last year, but that it was "a one-year deal."

"It don't mean things went up," Anderson said, referring to current year tax bills, which won't be due until after local millage rates are set. "I have no clue what the School Board and the Fire Department mill rate is going to be. I'm just telling you in advance that your bill will look like it is more this year by \$193.28."

In response to a question about the General Election ballot measure promoting a 3% cap for homesteaded properties, Anderson said that "Towns County is a little complicated."

"We've already got a school and county 3% cap that was passed in 2008, I believe," Anderson said. "So, if you're homesteaded in Towns County, your assessments can go up, but the exemption will also go up with it to keep it on a 3% level."

Last week, Anderson said he was unsure when the 2024 Property Tax Digest will be available for local taxing authorities to set their millage rates, as the appeals process for real property assessments will not be over until Oct. 31,

and a similar 45-day appeals period is needed for personal property assessments, which had yet to be mailed as of the beginning of last week.

He said that he would hopefully know by this week "how to proceed the best for the taxpayers."

County Attorney Robb Kiker also addressed the audience in the Oct. 14 meeting, explaining the way annual assessments are handled and clearing up some confusion about the role of the Commissioner's Office – or lack thereof – in the assessment process.

"(Commissioner Bradshaw) gets a lot of feedback about tax assessors and assessments," Kiker said, "so just to give you a kind of an overview, the Tax Assessors come like the Board of Health, an extension of the state of Georgia."

"What the commissioner does is gives you or appoints a Board of Tax Assessors, and they basically go under the commissioner. I think that's a problem, because people will read the code that says the 'commissioner' can direct, instruct and advise and educate these assessors."

"It is not talking about the (county) commissioner; they are talking about the Commissioner of Revenue. Because as soon as they are appointed, they have a commission controlling them from the Department of Revenue. They have to meet that commission by attending training and classes, and then they are given the manual they must follow."

"Regulation 5601110 is the appraisal procedures manual having to do with how real property is assessed and how it's considered for taxation. It's extremely detailed. Tax assessors take a property and apply these rules and regulations, and they put the information in and it comes out the other side based on this manual."

"Your commissioner cannot instruct the tax assessors to do anything at all. When you read 'commissioner,' it's confusing. It's not the Towns County Tax Assessor, it's actually the State of Georgia tax assessors, located in Towns County."

Anderson and Kiker's presentations prompted multiple questions from the audience, ranging from who makes up the assessor board, how they oversee the assessors, and why, in some people's view, some properties are overlooked while others are reassessed every year, and so on.

Kiker referred people back to the same regulation he mentioned previously in terms of the reassessment procedure, adding that the process is based on state-mandated sales ratios, and that "Towns County has historically been at the low end of that ratio and still is."

"What happens is they are given property values and ratios and factors that then indicate to them and place the property into the system for reassessment," Kiker said of the job assessors do. "They don't choose to do that. Basically, the numbers come out and they say something needs to be reassessed because it's outside the ratio."

Responding to a question from the public on a different topic, Bradshaw threw cold water on an apparent rumor that he was looking at implementing an ordinance about barking dogs, saying that he loves dogs and has dogs himself and would never do that.

The regular county meeting occurs the third Tuesday of each month at 5:30 p.m. inside the Towns County Courthouse, and the public is encouraged to attend.

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

10/21/24	Cordarius Ja'kharri Alford, age 31, Fayetteville, GA Sentenced to State
10/22/24	Ryan Zacharia Green, age 40, Easley, SC Failure to appear for fingerprintable charge-misdemeanor
10/21/24	Dwight Lamont Holland, III., age 36, Young Harris, GA Aggravated sexual battery, aggravated sodomy-commit sodomy with force against persons will or person
10/25/24	Ricky Dale Roddy, age 62, Homeless Failure to appear for fingerprintable charge-felony
10/24/24	Larry Steven Walden, age 52, Madison, GA Failure to appear for fingerprintable charge-misdemeanor
10/22/24	William James Criswell, age 56, Young Harris, GA Sentenced 24 hours
10/26/24	Holly June Fletcher, age 49, Dillsboro, NC Simple battery-family violence, willful obstruction of law enforcement officers-misdemeanor (2)
10/21/24	Tyler Kane Moss, age 29, Hayesville, NC Brake lights and turn signals required, trafficking in cocaine, illegal drugs, marijuana, or methamphetamine
10/26/24	Wayne Edward Patrick, age 56, Hiawassee, GA Open container in vehicle, requiring or permitting unlawful operation of vehicle, seatbelt violation-adult
10/22/24	Heather Marie Trembley, age 46, North Miami Beach, FL Driving while license suspended or revoked (misdemeanor), tail light required
10/21/24	Mary Ann Walker, age 60, Calhoun, GA Illegal possession of controlled substance (2), possession of drug related object, possession of marijuana -misdemeanor, possession of methamphetamine
10/26/24	Thomas Andrew Wooten, age 58, Blairsville, GA DUI-driving under the influence of alcohol, failure to drive within single lane, improper/erratic lane change, lighted headlights required at certain times open container in vehicle, reckless driving, seatbelt violation-adult, tires

FIRE DEPARTMENT

RESPONSE REPORT

From: Fire Chief Harold Copeland

10/19/24	Dispatched and cancelled en route (2) Medical assist, assist EMS crew (4) Electrical wiring/equipment problem, cancelled
10/20/24	Dispatched and cancelled Medical assist, assist EMS crew (3)
10/21/24	Medical assist, assist EMS crew (4) Setting up LZ for Air Evac/EMS (2) Assist police or other governmental agency Dispatched and cancelled en route Brush or brush-and-grass mixture fire Medical assist, assist EMS crew (3) Alarm system sounded due to malfunction Setting up LZ for Air Evac/EMS
10/23/24	Dispatched and cancelled en route Setting up LZ for Air Evac/EMS Medical assist, assist EMS crew (2)
10/24/24	Dispatched and cancelled en route (2) Medical assist, assist EMS crew (4) Brush or brush-and-grass mixture fire Setting up LZ for Air Evac/EMS
10/25/24	Dispatched and cancelled en route (2) Medical assist, assist EMS crew



T/Oct30.M1JH

Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp announces another \$1B tax rebate

By Dave Williams
Capitol Beat News Service

ATLANTA – For the second time in three years, Gov. Brian Kemp is giving Georgians a tax rebate worth more than \$1 billion.

Kemp said Tuesday, Oct. 22, he will include the rebate in the mid-year budget and introduces to the General Assembly in January. He said the extra money will come in handy, particularly for Georgians who suffered losses from Hurricane Helene.

"We all know that even if inflation has fallen, high prices haven't," he said. "Families see that every day when they go to the grocery store or the gas pump. ... People shouldn't have to deal with that added burden, especially in the wake of tragedy."

That Tuesday's announcement was the second tax relief measure the governor has issued in recent weeks. Kemp temporarily suspended collection of the state sales tax on gasoline and other motor fuels shortly after Helene struck

large portions of South Georgia and the Augusta region.

The governor proposed a similar tax rebate two years ago worth about \$1 billion. The General Assembly approved that rebate during the 2023 legislative session.

Under the new tax rebate, single tax filers will receive \$250. A single filer who is the head of his or her household will get \$375, and married couples filing jointly will receive \$500.

Kemp said the state can afford the rebate because conservative budgeting has helped the state build up a huge budget surplus. He said he'd rather send that money back to taxpayers instead of pouring it into new government programs.

"This is one-time money ... a way for us to use our excess surplus to get it back to the people we believe know how to use it best," he said. "The worst mistake the state could make would be to grow government with one-time money."

November is National Family Caregivers Month



Since 1997, November has been designated as National Family Caregivers Month. It is a time to honor caregivers for their dedication and sacrifice in caring for loved ones, friends or neighbors. A caregiver facilitates care for a person unable to take care of one or more of their own daily basic needs. Caregiving can be live-in care or aid provided to someone outside of the home. A caregiver most often is a daughter or son, mother or father, wife or husband who is

providing care to a disabled relative.

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) estimates that one in five American adults is caring for a person with a chronic disease or disability.

The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) shares suggestions on their website on how to honor a caregiver or provide them with much needed support. Several ideas include: sending a card to a caregiver you know thanking them for their service; cooking a meal for a caregiver and the person they provide care to; spending time with a caregiver so that they know they are not alone; offering to sit with the person in need of care; and encouraging a caregiver to spend time taking care of themselves.

It is often difficult for caregivers to ask others for help. That is one reason why National Family Caregivers Month is so important. It is a way for friends and family to assist and honor a caregiver. It can also be a time for caregivers to recognize there are others in their situation and to reach out for support themselves. One local support group for caregivers is called We Care. We Care, meets on the first Friday of every month at 11:30 am at Redeemer Baptist Church, 39 Youngstown Church Road, in Blairsville.

This month, fellowship and a Thanksgiving meal will be prepared by those who want to serve you at RBC on Friday, November 1st. If you would like to join us, please RSVP at 706-897-5221.

TCSO continues to get drugs off streets

News Special

A Towns County Sheriff's Office Drug Investigator recently received a tip in reference to a person of interest transporting drugs into the county.

A monthlong investigation and two-week surveillance of the individual came to a conclusion on Monday, Oct. 21, during a traffic stop.

Probable cause was developed during the stop, and a search of the vehicle resulted in the confiscation of an amount of methamphetamine, which field-tested positive and was packaged for sale, along with marijuana packaged for sale, Xanax pills and drug paraphernalia.

An amount of cash was also confiscated along with the vehicle.

Mary Ann Walker, 60, of Calhoun, was arrested and charged with felony possession of methamphetamine; felony possession of a controlled substance with intent to

distribute; felony possession of a controlled substance; possession of marijuana; and possession and use of drug-related objects.

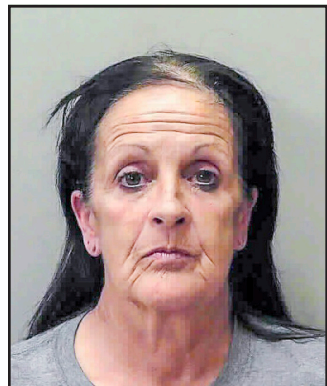
Sheriff Ken Henderson is committed to his agency's fight against drugs in Towns County and appreciates the commitment of his drug investigator for bringing this to an arrest and preventing these drugs from being transported into the community.

In a separate incident on

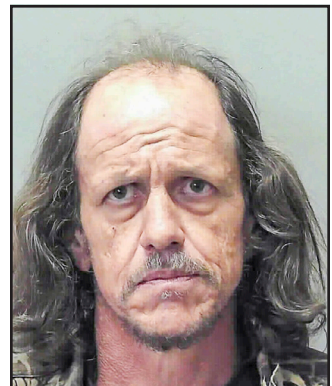
Oct. 18, Towns County Sheriff's Office Investigators and uniform patrol, during concentrated patrols, conducted a traffic stop on US 76 near Walgreens in the City of Hiawassee.

During the stop, probable cause was developed, and a search of the vehicle resulted in the confiscation of an amount of methamphetamine, which field-tested positive.

Jason Wallace Lanus, 53, of Hiawassee, was arrested



Mary Ann Walker



Jason Wallace Lanus



Frank Riley with friends at Mountain Scene Farms.

Photo by Linda Riley

especially with property as valuable as this is with three-quarters of the Hiwassee River running through it," noted Riley, who recognizes his family's privilege for serving as the land's stewards. Luckily, he's not the only one.

Along with him, his brother, sisters and their children are all keenly aware of the farm's history and care for it deeply. While there's no question about the monetary value of the property, they believe more in the worth of history and perfectly natural surroundings.

"The fields and wood-

lands around the Mountain Scene Farms are much like they were when I was growing up," Riley said. "(We) want to keep it just the way it was when Granddaddy Brown roamed these fields and woodlands."

To ensure that, legal proceedings are underway to have a conservation easement placed on the land. The document will limit use and outline how the property can be developed in the future, seeing to it that nature will always be preserved when it comes to the farm's surroundings.

As it stands, nobody else

lives on the land except for Riley and his wife Linda, and they still carry on the tradition of farming.

Though she grew up on the property, Sarah Brown Riley resides in an assisted living facility farther south. Still, she was proud to accept the Centennial Farm Award recognizing her beloved home as an outstanding piece of history.

It's no surprise that her son shares the sentiment: "Some things, money just can't buy – history, memories and the beauty and solitude of the property."

Area man arrested for aggravated sexual battery

News Special

On Sunday, Oct. 20, the Towns County Sheriff's Office received a report of aggravated sexual battery on a 16-year-old juvenile victim.

The Union County Sheriff's Office assisted in the investigation, which revealed the female victim had been sexually assaulted by Dwight Lamont Holland, 36, at a residence in Towns County.

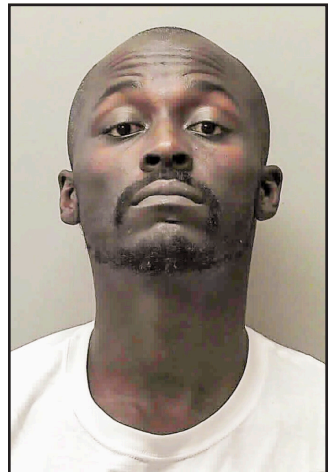
Probable cause was developed, and the suspect was arrested by the Murphy Police Department in North Carolina.

During an interview of

Holland by a Towns County Investigator, Holland confessed to the crime. He is being held without bond in the Towns County Detention Center on charges of felony aggravated sexual battery and felony aggravated sodomy.

Sheriff Ken Henderson commends the hard work done by the Towns County Sheriff's Office Investigation Division and would also like to thank Union County for their assistance during a two-day investigation.

Individuals are presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.



Dwight Lamont Holland

Chimp or Treat...from Page 1



Minnie Mouse served as a tour guide during the 2024 Chimp or Treat pre-Halloween event at the Morganton-based Project Chimps. Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

costumed children was invaluable. Most special of all, however, was the opportunity to see the rescued lab animals up close and personal.

Usually, the facility is closed to the public to protect the chimps' health and preserve their privacy, but the gates open every year on the weekend before Halloween as part of an outreach program to get the community wild about the great apes.

Tour guides led groups of about 20 to 40 people on the adventure, pointing out sites integral to the upkeep of the "chimp retirement home." To start, the tours checked out the kitchen, where volunteers and staff prepare three meals a day for some 95 hungry apes.

Just up ahead was a shed containing donated firehoses, the cut-up pieces of which are used to make hammocks for the chimps. Right beside it was a barn holding hay, which the chimps utilize as bedding material beneath their blankets and plush stuffed animals.

Another important stop was the veterinary center. Because chimpanzees boast similar anatomy to humans, some doctors with a history of working on people help when necessary. For example, certified cardiologists have performed heart surgeries on ailing

chimps in the medical facility.

The main attractions were the buildings where the chimps live, called villas, which are decorated with portraits of the chimps who call them home. The chimps run in a circle around the 6-acre Peachtree Habitat and are released outside at different times of day to prevent fighting among the groups that live in each villa.

Along with trick-or-treating, visitors took commemorative photos against colorful murals and peeked into the sanctuary through various windows. One inquisitive chimp – either Leo or Hercules – came right up to the viewing window to investigate the festively dressed kiddos.

Whoever the friendly ape was, he entertained viewers of all ages by clutching the enclosure wire with his hands and feet, shaking his head in greeting and pouting his lower lip. He hung around for a time, soaking up the attention like a champ and showing off with a wide grin of his own sharp fangs, though there was no vampiric intent. After he had his fill, he slipped away as easily as he came and headed back into the forested depths of the yard.

Earlier in the same tour, everyone had a one-of-

a-kind experience with about six chimps on the sky bridge. After lunch, a handful of the troop came out to sit on the wired structure to get some fresh air. Children cheered and adults pulled out cameras as the primates looked on, perhaps amused by their animated guests.

The bridge conglomerate, presenting themselves not unlike some silent, judgmental council, may not have been as interactive as the window swinger, but Digital Content Coordinator Holly Chadwick assured they were certainly paying attention.

"The fact that she's sitting there and watching says a lot," Chadwick promised, referring to one chimp who turned her head in response to photos and quietly watched a dog-suited representative from a local animal rescue jump around on the ground below her.

That is what the event is all about, said tour guide Paige Jennings, who, in her lady Viking costume, referred to herself as Brunhilda for Halloween. Dressing up and candy are fun, but making connections and recording meaningful memories is what really counts, and Project Chimps has succeeded in doing so for all – even for the chimpanzees.

Fatal Wreck...from Page 1

Zion's death: <https://gofund.me/16c4fb35>.

"This young family has worked hard to create a beautiful life for themselves and their child, and this tragedy has altered the trajectory of their lives forever," Johnson wrote. "During this incredibly difficult time, we are reaching

out to our community for your love, support, and generosity.

"The financial burden of this unexpected loss is immense, and we are humbly asking for your help to cover the costs of funeral expenses, medical bills, and other related expenses.

"Any contribution, no

matter how small, will make a significant difference in helping us navigate this challenging period. Your kindness and compassion will provide immeasurable comfort to our family as we grieve the loss of precious Zion.

"Thank you for your understanding and support."

Warning: Heaters – One Spark Away from Disaster

Here is my seasonal reminder about the dangers in our homes this time of the year: it is our when we fire up the old wood heater or fireplace so we can enjoy the dancing flames, crackling of the wood burning so we can warm our backsides and toes. We don't think about the cobwebs, bird nests, and creosote in our chimney left over from the long hot summer. When it is hot, we don't think about cleaning out our chimney for the first fire. It gets cold and we light the match and plan to clean the chimney on Saturday. Saturday might be too late after our first chimney fire!

Wood heaters and fireplaces make the room warm and toasty but are only one escaping spark away from disaster. Wood heaters seem most dangerous but in fact seemingly safe space heaters are the deadliest of all. While only 32 percent of home heating fires involve space heaters, they are involved in 79 percent of home heating fire deaths, according to a report released by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA).

Heating equipment continues to be the second leading cause of home fires behind cooking and the second leading cause of home fire deaths behind smoking. NFPA is urging caution and asking the public to practice safe heating behaviors as the peak time for home heating fires continues, and half of all home heating fires usually happen in December, January, and February. The leading factor contributing to space heater fires in general was heating equipment too close to things that can burn, such as upholstered furniture, clothing, mattress, or bedding. Other leading factors contributing to home heater fires were failure to clean, which is principally related to creosote build-up in chimneys, and leaving an operating space heater unattended.

Whether your chimney supports a wood or coal stove or just a fireplace, be sure to have it cleaned and inspected

at least once a year to reduce your risk of having a fire. Always turn off a portable space heater when you go to sleep or leave the room.

In 2022, U.S. fire departments responded to 66,500 home structure fires that involved heating equipment. These fires killed 580 people, injured another 1,850, and were responsible for \$608 million in direct property damage.

NFPA offers the following safety tips: Use a sturdy, metal screen to prevent contact burns, which are even more common than flame burns. Keep things that can burn, such as paper, bedding, or furniture, at least 3 feet away from heating equipment. Use heating equipment that has the label of a recognized testing laboratory. Never use your oven for heating. Have a qualified professional install the equipment.

Make sure all fuel-burning vented equipment is vented to the outside to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning. Make sure the venting for exhaust is kept clear and unobstructed. This includes removal of snow and ice around the outlet to the outside. Install and maintain carbon monoxide alarms to avoid risk of carbon monoxide poisoning. Maintain heating equipment and chimneys by having them cleaned and inspected annually by a qualified professional.

Turn portable electric heaters off when you go to bed or leave the room. Use portable space heaters with an automatic shut off so if they're tipped over they will shut off. Plug power cords directly into outlets and never into an extension cord. Inspect for cracked or damaged, broken plugs or loose connections.

Always use the proper fuel in a fuel burning heater as specified by the manufacturer. When refueling, allow the appliance to cool and refuel outside or in a well-ventilated area. When using the heater, open a window to ensure proper ventilation. In portable kerosene or other liquid-



Frank Riley, Executive Director of RC&D

fueled space heaters, always use the proper grade of the proper fuel. All new unvented gas-fired space heaters have an oxygen depletion sensor that detects a reduced level of oxygen in the area where the heater is operating and shuts off the heater before a hazardous level of carbon monoxide accumulates. If you have an older heater without this feature, replace it.

If the pilot light of your gas heater goes out, allow 5 minutes or more for the gas to go away before trying again, do not allow gas to accumulate, and light the match before you turn on the gas to the pilot to avoid risk of flashback. If you smell gas in your gas heater, do not attempt to light the appliance. Turn off all the controls and open doors and windows. Call a gas service person. Start the fire with newspaper or kindling, never with a flammable liquid, such as lighter fluid, kerosene, or gasoline. Keep the doors of your wood stove closed unless loading or stoking the live fire. Allow ashes to cool before disposing. Dispose of ashes in a tightly covered metal (Never Plastic!) container and keep the ash container at least 10 feet away from the home and any other nearby buildings. Douse and saturate with water.

Chimneys and vents need to be cleaned and inspected at least once a year by a professional. Heaters are just "Contained Fire" trying to get out into our flammable things, and it only takes one mistake to let the fire escape into our homes. Think safety because the home you save might be yours!

For more information on heater safety, contact your local Fire Department or NFPA at nfpa.org or ChestChatt@Chestchattcd.org. NT10c30Z14/JCA

Make big Christmas ornaments at Hiawassee Garden Club Nov. 16th



Pictured are the large ornaments that you can decorate in your own style at the Hiawassee Garden Clubhouse on Saturday, November 16, 2024 at 1:30 p.m. You are asked to bring scissors, glue gun and a small pair of wire cutters.

The cost is \$25 plus \$6 for supplies, check or cash at the door. We do need your

email RSVP to dancefair8@yahoo.com so we have a head count. Thank you in advance.

The HGC Clubhouse is located at 34 River Street, directly behind the Towns County Courthouse.

Parking can be at the Courthouse Annex (tax office) across the street or pull in on the lawn. T10c30A5/JCA



Baby kittens are still being delivered to castoff. Please spay and neuter your cats

and dogs. Help us find loving homes for kitties and cats and dogs. All Castoff Pet Rescues are friendly loving and need homes. These four are sweet kittens.

Come play Bingo on Wednesday at Civic Center, Wellborn Street, Blairsville. Games start at 7 PM. Win big money! NT10c30Z12/JCA



ARFS Offers Help to Stop Cycle of Abandoned Kittens at Red House

The red house in Hiawassee has become a hotspot for dropping abandoned kittens, and ARFS is hoping to put an end to the cycle of emergency kitten situations. If you are the person responsible for leaving kittens at the red house, ARFS would like to offer its assistance in trapping and fixing the cats to prevent further unwanted litters.

By spaying and neuter-

ing the cats, it will help decrease the number of kittens in need of rescue and fostering.

If you are the individual leaving the kittens or know who is, please call 1-762-294-9467 to arrange for someone to help trap the cats.

Let's work together to ensure the well-being of these animals and prevent further over population issues in our community. NT10c30A2/JH

ARFS: Give Your Pain Purpose

If you have lost a dearly loved pet and your heart is grieving, why not "give your pain purpose" by making a donation to Animal Rescue Financial Support (ARFS) in honor of your cherished fur friend.

ARFS will use your donation to provide medical care for an animal that is suffering and has an owner who cannot afford veterinary expenses.

Memorials can be made to ARFS, P.O. Box 972, Hiawassee, GA 30546 or on ARFS website (www.arfs-inc.org) by clicking the DONATE button. Please indicate that your donation is a memorial and provide the name of your pet. Memorials will be posted on ARFS's website, unless you request otherwise.

Let's not forget that precious pet that gave you so much joy. Let's give your pain purpose! NT10c30Z3/JCA

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. T10c30A1/JH

Dementia Caregivers Support Group

If you are caring for a person with dementia, join us for our monthly meeting for conversation, education, and support. The Towns County Support Group meets the first Tuesday every month at 1:30 at McConnell Memorial Baptist Church in Hiawassee. For more details call Alzheimer's Association at 800-273-3900 or email shannonlaney@comfortkeepers.com. NT10c30Z1/JCA

DO YOU NEED COPY PAPER?



20# Copy Paper • 92 Brightness

\$4⁹⁹

per ream of 500 sheet

\$49⁹⁹

per case of 5000 sheets

Towns County Herald

Located in the Mall, Hiawassee, GA

706-896-4454