

# Towns County Herald

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## Hiawassee liquor stores pass with 65% voter support

By Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
Editor

The electorate has spoken – package liquor stores are heading to the City of Hiawassee.

Election Day voting on Nov. 2 saw a final tally of 169 votes cast in the Hiawassee Election, with 110 city voters supporting the referendum to allow the licensing of package liquor stores inside Hiawassee City Limits.

It wasn't popular with everyone, as 59 voters rejected the measure, though the establishment of liquor stores ultimately won the day with 65% of the vote.

"It's a very controversial topic, but I think it'll be good income for the city, which is really the driver for this, to bring in a source where you can maintain your (property) taxes low yet still have a revenue stream for the city," Mayor Liz Ordiales said.

Per the City of Hiawassee Alcohol Ordinance, all retail package store licenses "shall be awarded on a first come first serve basis with first consideration given to the first applicant(s) with 100% complete applications that demonstrate the applicant having met all the requirements."

One nearly completed liquor license application was filed Wednesday, Nov. 3, about

12 hours after the results of the election were known, with the only remaining local hurdle being a second week of legal organ publication of the potential owners' intent to open a liquor store.

Following successful completion of the Hiawassee licensing process, Kristin Grier and Kitt Hock, owners of The Tilted Café, will need to get licensed by the state, at which point they may open their "Tilted Bottle" package store at an existing property on 757 Belle Aire Commons, just off Bell Creek Road.

Also the day after the election, Ordiales fielded three calls about licenses, so interest is high, and the city is posi-

tioned to bring in many thousands of dollars a month in additional alcohol excise taxes on top of the roughly \$100,000 a year Hiawassee is already receiving based on sales of on-premises alcohol and package beer/wine.

As defined in the city ordinance, "package" means "a bottle, can, keg, barrel, box or other original consumer container," and there are no limits on the geographic location or number of package liquor stores that can be established inside city limits except as provided by state law.

Georgia law stipulates that distilled spirits may not be sold within 100 yards of any church building or within

200 yards of any school building. There are several churches within the 1-mile radius of Hiawassee and two schools, Eastgate Life Academy and at McConnell Baptist Church.

The city's alcohol ordinance does, however, outline specific requirements of would-be licensees, including a minimum wholesale inventory of \$300,000, at least 2,000 square feet per store location, and the provision of a surveyor's certificate enumerating distance to schools, etc.

Package liquor sales will be allowed between 8 a.m. and 11:59 p.m. Monday through Saturday, with no authorized Sunday sales.

See *Liquor Stores*, Page 2A



Hiawassee Mayor Liz Ordiales was present at the Board of Elections for the results of the successful city package store referendum Nov. 2. Photo by Mark Smith

## Ammons Sisters, area authors unveil new library mural

By Brittany Holbrooks  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

YOUNG HARRIS – The magic of the North Georgia Mountains came alive Nov. 5 when the Mountain Regional Library unveiled its gorgeous new mural entitled "Storybook Lane."

The mural is one of more than a hundred stops on the Appalachian Mural Trail, which can be viewed in its entirety at muraltrail.com.

Visitors gathered Friday afternoon to watch the reveal of the vibrant work of art that featured scenes such as a bear cub peering through the window of a cabin and a boy sitting at the end of a dirt road with his dog.

An impressive storytelling show followed the mural unveiling inside the library. Complete with refreshments, the setup featured a massive easel, a CD player, and prints showcasing single illustrations from the mural.

Mural artist Doreyl Ammons Cain took about six



Doreyl Ammons Cain, of Appalachian Mural Trail and Catch the Spirit of Appalachia, Inc., and MRLS Public Services Coordinator Heather Welch posing with the Young Harris library's new "Storybook Lane" mural Nov. 5.

Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

## BOE considers GSBA student survey; school finances 'A-OK'



Towns County Principals Dr. Connie Hobbs, Shannon Moss and Roy Perren had excellent COVID news in the Nov. 1 Board of Education meeting – no positive cases among any of the students in their respective schools.

By Mark Smith  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

Young Harris Mayor Andrea Gibby addressed members of the Towns County Board of Education at their Nov. 1 meeting, asking that they consider and approve a request from the Georgia School Boards Association to allow high school seniors to participate in a survey.

In addition to being the Mayor of Young Harris, Gibby works in the mental health

field with children and young adults, and she serves on a Georgia School Boards Association committee that works with the Youth Advisory Council, which was formed by the GSBA.

The committee that Gibby is a member of is interested in finding out why high school students aren't more engaged with government and other organizations outside their immediate realm.

Gibby said the survey will generate valuable data both for the GSBA and for

Towns County Schools. The board took the request under advisement and will likely render a decision at the December meeting.

Finance Director Myra Underwood said some property tax money was beginning to come in from this year's levy.

"Possibly November, on into December, we'll start seeing that increase when the property taxes go out and we'll start the collections again," she said.

Underwood said the income from Title Ad-Valorem

See *School Board*, Page 8A

## Nichols ready to promote community ethic at Rec Center

By Brittany Holbrooks  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

YOUNG HARRIS – Last month, Towns County resident and native Stuart Nichols became the new director of the Towns County Recreation Department, announced in the Oct. 19 meeting of Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw.

Stuart is replacing former Parks and Recreation Director Matthew Youngblood, who served in the position for four years before embracing a change in career paths recently.

Inspired by a natural inclination to sports, Nichols took to his new job immediately.



Stuart Nichols  
Recreation Director

moving to a public sector line of work.

"There's a lot of moving parts; that's probably the biggest challenge for me," he said. "Previously, if I saw something that needed to be addressed, depending on what it was, I would go to the hardware, buy the part or material, and I'd go fix it. It's not necessarily like that here."

And it's no wonder Nichols felt as if he was in the midst of a culture shock, as he used to work exclusively in the private sector.

He spent 17 years building docks on Lake Chatugee, but in the aftermath the Great Recession of 2008 and '09,

See *Rec Center*, Page 8A

## Enotah CASA's Lonano speaks with Movers and Shakers

By Mark Smith  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

Nicole Lonano, Lead Advocate Supervisor and Trainer for the Court Appointed Special Advocates of the Enotah Judicial Circuit, spoke at the Mountain Movers and Shakers meeting on Friday, Nov. 5.

Enotah CASA serves Towns, Union, Lumpkin and White Counties, with Judge Jeremy Clough presiding over the Enotah Circuit Juvenile and Dependency Court.

Lonano's address Friday morning was a reminder of the extreme need for child advocates and foster parents/homes in North Georgia, and an update on how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected Dependency Court operations.

"So, when I grew up in foster care, there was no such thing as CASA; I was lucky to have a guardian ad litem at the time," said Lonano, adding that, unlike CASAs, guardians ad litem are paid through the court system with tax dollars.

CASAs are unpaid volunteers, although they are greatly rewarded when they see cases come to fruition thanks to their advocacy efforts for children stuck in the legal system through no fault of their own. CASAs have the satisfaction of knowing that they have, literally, saved a life.

"I am a psychologist by trade," Lonano said. "I have always worked with children and foster care. I've dedicated my whole career to children and foster care. We (as CASAs) advocate for the best interest of the children."

These children end up in Dependency Court, not because of anything they have done wrong, but because their parents or legal guardians have either abandoned them or have abused them in some way – or both – mostly due to substance abuse.

But, make no mistake, taking on the responsibility of advocating for a child is no walk in the park. Because there is such a lack of foster care resources in North Georgia, many of these kids are placed in foster homes that are hours away from North Georgia, Lonano said.

Their lives are disrupted, friends and school left behind, parents possibly incarcerated, and they face new and difficult challenges in their new surroundings.

What these children need is someone in their lives who can be their rock, their anchor to hold on to; someone they can depend on, trust, and who takes the time to offer dedication, patience, and love. For many of these children, that someone is a CASA.

Aside from the reports and evaluations required of a CASA for the court, and the visitations, it takes a lot of time and a lot of work, Lonano said.

But the rewards of watching over a child and helping that child grow into a well-adjusted, responsible, happy human being are unfathomable – far greater than anything money could ever buy.

"We do our own investigations," she said. "We talk to everybody in the puzzle. We talk to parents, we talk to attorneys, we talk to doctors, we



Having experienced foster care herself as a child, Enotah CASA's Nicole Lonano has extra insight into the circumstances of kids she's helping to advocate for.

Photo by Mark Smith

get hospital records, and we are, basically, the judge's eyes and ears in the community.

"We are appointed directly by the judge to do this. And our job is to ensure that the kids have safe, stable housing, that they're getting the medical attention that they need, and that they're getting the therapy that they need.

"A lot of times we are not aligned with anybody in the courtroom. We are our own (independent) entity, and the CASA is typically the only constant in the child's life. The case managers change, the attorneys change, everybody changes except that one CASA. That one CASA is usually with that child through the whole life of the case."

That is, until they come of age or are adopted. Incidentally, CASAs also participate

See *Enotah CASA*, Page 8A

2 Sections 16 Pages

Lake Levels

Blue Ridge	1,669.43
Chatuge	1,918.40
Nottely	1,762.21

Arrests 2A  
Chamber 5A  
Church 4B  
Classifieds 6B  
Opinion 4A  
Legals 7B  
Obits 5B  
Sports 2B

### SPORTS

#### BASKETBALL

11/11

@ Stephens Co.

Scrimmage 6 PM

### Veterans Day

#### Program

Nov. 11 @ 11 a.m.

Towns County

Veterans Park

### TCHS Students

#### of the Week

See page 5A

### USMC Birthday

#### Celebration

Nov. 10

See page 8B

# Liquor Stores...from Page 1A

Several attempts to get package sales on the ballot have failed in recent years

due to a 35% of the electorate petition requirement in state law.

## Rotary Club Wreath Sale

The Rotary Club of Lake Chatuge again this year will be selling 22 inch Frazer fir Christmas wreaths, these are long-lasting, beautiful wreaths. The profits from the sales of the wreaths will be used to support three Christmas projects of Towns County, the Shop with a Hero, Sheriff's Empty Stocking and the Lion's Club Give A Christmas. The cost of the wreaths is \$25 each. Please contact Gerry Gutenstein at 706-835-5342. Orders will be taken until November 16. Wreaths will be available on November 22. T(Nov10,F3)SH

In 2021, however, the Georgia General Assembly changed the law to say a referendum may now be called via "ordinance or resolution from the governing authority of any municipality or county," or by "written petition containing the signatures of at least 20% of (the electorate)."

So, the Hiwassee City Council voted unanimously June 1 to add the liquor store referendum to the Nov. 2 ballot, with a major rationale being to keep tax dollars in the city that would otherwise be going to, say, the state-run Clay County ABC Store in Hayesville, North Carolina.

"During my due dili-

gence on this, I went to the ABC liquor store in Hayesville – many cars from Georgia there – and I asked the guy that was running the register, 'How much business do you get from Towns County?'" she said. "His answer to me was, 'If it wasn't for Towns County, we'd be out of business.'"

Ordiales said the city will need to wait until liquor stores are up and running to get a better idea of what alcohol excise tax collections will be, but based on an analysis the city did on the ABC store in Hayesville, she anticipates upward of \$150,000 to \$200,000 a year.

"That's the entire property tax base for the city, so it's substantial," Ordiales said. "(In terms of how we will use that money), we're going to continue with our strategic plan, which is economic development within the city.

"Now, we'll have more opportunity to see what we can do with more parks and fix the roads. The Paris Buildings we're very excited about, I think that's going to be a game changer for the city.

"It would be a general fund income, so we can pretty much do anything with it. It's not going to be water or sewer, but it will certainly help our Police Department."

In addition to providing additional tax revenues – including sales taxes – Ordiales said liquor stores will assist the local tourism industry, as guests of the area are often looking to relax with dis-

tilled spirits.

As far as potential impact on crime and drunk driving, Hiwassee Police Chief Paul Smith said he did not anticipate that opening a package store would "cause an increase in intoxicated driving in the same way that a business with on-site drinking would."

"Package stores are, however, often targets of robberies and burglaries," he said. "The Hiwassee Police Department will routinely patrol these areas to discourage crime. I will also work with the owners of any business in town to identify safety concerns and advise on crime prevention solutions."

Running the 2021 Hiwassee Municipal Election was the Towns County Board of Elections, for which Ordiales said the city was grateful.

## Cothren named Distinguished Military Graduate

The University of North Georgia (UNG) is tied for the most Distinguished Military Graduates (DMG) among the nation's six senior military colleges for 2021-22, with 32 selected. Nine of those rank in the top 10% of their ROTC class nationally.

Thomas Cothren of Young Harris, GA, was one of the DMG cadets. NT(Nov10,Z10)CA

## Cozy Country Christmas Arts & Crafts show

On Saturday, November 20th from 9 AM - 4 PM the halls and patio of North Georgia Technical College in Blairsville will be decked with 50+ local crafters at the Cozy Country Christmas Arts & Crafts show. Shop local and handmade for rustic wood items, quilts, soap, candles, pottery, holiday decor plus more. Free admission. NT(Nov10,Z10)CA

## American Red Cross Volunteers

Make a difference in your community! As a volunteer with the American Red Cross, you can help families recover after a home fire, train individuals in first aid and CPR, support America's military families, or take on any number of other roles that make our communities safer, stronger and more resilient. Get started at <https://www.redcross.org/local/georgia/volunteer.html> or call your NWGA chapter office to ask about volunteer opportunities 844-536-6226. NT(Nov10,Z1)CA

## Georgia Mountain Pregnancy Center

The Georgia Mountain Pregnancy Center offers free first Trimester ultrasound, pregnancy test, and counseling.

The center is located at 136 Hospital Drive Road, Suite A, Blairsville, GA; (706)994-3364; [gmpcmedical.org](http://gmpcmedical.org) NT(Nov10,Z1)CA

# 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.



- 11/2/21 Jessica Chase Doan Possession of THC oil, Possession of meth
- 11/4/21 Austen Tyler Gagne-Martinez Failure to drive w/in single lane, Marijuana possess less than 1 oz., Possession of drug-related objects, Possession of Schedule I controlled substance
- 11/1/21 Terry Lynn Nichols Sentenced
- 11/5/21 Jose Angel Villareal Theft by deception
- 11/4/21 Jason Joseph Williams Probation violation
- 11/1/21 Gregory Shawn Bethea Serve 24 hours
- 11/1/21 Richard Gregory Chapman Marijuana possess less than 1 oz.
- 11/5/21 Robert Edwin Jones DUI - alcohol, Failure to drive w/in single lane, Knowingly driving vehicle on suspended, cancelled or revoked registration, Tires
- 11/1/21 Kaselyn Rose Martin Marijuana possess less than 1 oz.
- 11/4/21 Bobby Dean Matheson Driving while license suspended or revoked, Expired vehicle tag or decal T(Nov10,G2)SH

Towns County Community Calendar		
School Board	<b>First Monday of each month:</b> HS/MS Media Center	6:45 pm
	<b>First Tuesday of each month:</b> City Hall	6 pm
Hiaw. City Council	YH City Hall	7 pm
Young Harris City Council	Civic Center	8 am
Conventions & Visitors Board	<b>Second Wednesday every other month:</b> Elections Office	4 pm
Board of Elections	<b>Third Monday of each month:</b> Civic Center	6 pm
Planning Commission	Water Office	6 pm
Water Board	<b>Third Tuesday of each month:</b> Courthouse	5:30 pm
Commissioner's Mtg.		

## Book Sale at library in Young Harris



Friends of the Libraries of Towns County (FOLTC) is holding an "Honor System" sale during the month of November in the FOLTC bookstore at Mountain Regional Library, 698 Miller St., Young Harris, GA. This sale will include the following items ONLY: Paperbacks - \$.50 each or 3/\$1. This includes trade, mass market, and large print paperback books. CDs - \$.50 each or 3/\$1. Jigsaw puzzles - \$.50 each.

The sale tables are located along the back wall of the bookstore. Paperbacks on the shelving to the right inside the door are also included in the sale.

The sale will be held on

the "Honor System." There is a red money box near the entrance to the bookstore for payment. Books will be replenished on a regular basis as space becomes available. MRL and the FOLTC bookstore are open Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. though closed for Thanksgiving on November 24-28. All proceeds will benefit the Towns County libraries. Funds are used to purchase books and other library materials, provide funding for children's and adult programming, and assist in other ways as requested by staff of Mountain Regional Library and Towns County Public Library. Good libraries need good friends! T(Nov10,F3)SH

