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E-911 Center to get new phone system; Bradshaw renews Forestry contract

By Chad Stack
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

In a Nov. 6 called meeting, Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw signed a \$220,000 lease agreement with AT&T to upgrade the phone system at the E-911 Dispatch Center.

The original price for the new system was around \$270,000, though Bradshaw said E-911 Director Marty Roberts talked the company down to \$220,000 for a five-year lease.

"We've got about a \$49,000 discount on it, plus they included some free equipment at the end that we needed," Bradshaw said. "We looked at buying and we looked at leasing."

"The lease price was just a little bit more, but when

you look at the numbers, the lease process included the maintenance on it.

"So, instead of having to pay quarterly maintenance on it, it's included in the lease price, which also means that if lightning hit and took the whole tower out, they would replace it at no charge in the lease."

The current phone system is about 12 years old and costly to repair. For example, replacement charges for past damage to just two phones cost about \$14,000, though the same damage will be 100% covered under the new lease agreement.

In addition to cost savings, the county stands to benefit in other ways from the upgraded phone system, including compliance with Next Generation 911, or NG911.

"The success and

reliability of 911 will be greatly improved with the implementation of NG911, as it will enhance emergency number services to create a faster, more resilient system that allows voice, photos, videos and text messages to flow seamlessly from the public to the 911 network," according to 911.gov.

And the new system will be digital as opposed to the current analog system, with the latest and greatest technology available on the market, Roberts said.

Ultimately, Bradshaw said the county is working to bring 911 dispatch up to date with the best technology to "protect our citizens of the county."

"We want to get EMS response time even better than See County Meeting, Page 8A



L-R: Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw, Fire Chief Harold Copeland and E-911 Director Marty Roberts. Photo by Chad Stack

Edwards settles in as elections supervisor; board office awaits state



L-R: Towns County Registrar Carolyn Chastain, Elections Supervisor Rachel Edwards and Elections Board Chair Janet Oliva. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

The Towns County Board of Elections and Registration welcomed Rachel Edwards as the county's new elections supervisor last month.

Following the resignation of Tonya Nichols, Edwards started at the board office on Oct. 21, and she is hoping to complete her training as an election official and registrar by the end of the year.

A Davids County native, Edwards should be a familiar face to most. After all, she graduated Class of '97 from Towns County High, and

she worked at the local Tax Assessor's Office for 13 years before transitioning to the elections board office.

"I was born and raised here and know the majority of Towns County residents," Edwards said, "and I enjoy working as a public servant."

Edwards applied for the position to experience new career challenges, she said, and she'll definitely be getting plenty of those in 2020 – arguably the biggest election cycle in recent memory.

Rejoining the board office is Registrar Carolyn Chastain, who left her position in May but returned last month, much to the delight of elections

board members.

Chastain has been a registrar in Towns County for 14 years. Her duties largely include registering voters and making sure county voting lists are up to date.

In other news, Board Chair Janet Oliva and Edwards webinar by State Elections Director Chris Harvey to stay up to date on all things dealing with the new Dominion Voting Systems machines that will be used in the 2020 elections.

Specifically, Oliva is waiting to hear next steps regarding new voting equipment delivery, on which the board

See Elections, Page 3A

TCSO traffic stops, search warrants continue to yield drug arrests

News Special
Towns County Herald

The Towns County Sheriff's Office continues to make good on its promise to pursue and arrest drug suspects in the community, with more traffic stops and search warrants producing drug arrests in recent weeks.

On Tuesday, Oct. 29, a deputy made a traffic stop on a Ford F-150 in the area of Shallow Creek Road on Georgia 288.

Upon further investigation, a passenger in the truck, Chad Patterson, 41, of Hayesville, North Carolina, was arrested and charged with possession of methamphetamine, possession of drug-related objects, possession of marijuana, and open container.

On Friday, Nov. 1, a

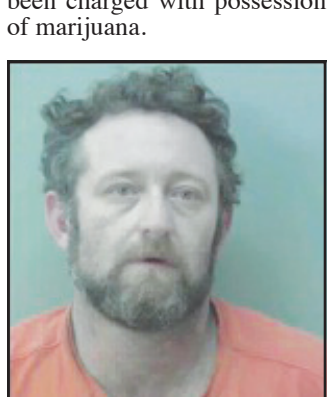
deputy stopped a Pontiac Grand Am on US 76 in Young Harris.

Further investigation into the traffic stop led to the arrest of Michael Dakota Russell, 18, of Morgantown, who was a passenger in the vehicle. He has been charged with possession of marijuana.

On Saturday, Nov. 2, a Towns County deputy made a traffic stop on a Ford Mustang on US 76 in Young Harris.

Upon further investigation, the deputy arrested the driver of the vehicle, identified as Robert Lyn Byrd, 39, of Blairsville.

See Drug Arrests, Page 8A



Chad Patterson



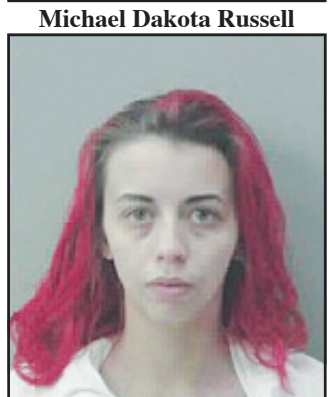
Michael Dakota Russell



Robert Byrd



Benjamin Rayburn



Chelsey Joy Brock

Food Pantry readying 'true Thanksgiving meal' for patrons



L-R: Elaine Dotson, Richard Thomas, Frances Norton and Teresa Stephens all work out of the Towns County Food Pantry building in Young Harris. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

By Jarrett Whitener
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

With Thanksgiving just around the corner, the Towns County Food Pantry is getting ready to send off holiday dinners to help families in need celebrate the occasion as other families do.

"During Thanksgiving, we give what I call a true

Thanksgiving meal," said Food Pantry Coordinator Richard Thomas. "We give turkey, stuffing, cranberry sauce, pumpkin to makes pies. So yes, we give a traditional box."

The Food Pantry gives away more than 100 regular meals a week, so they are anticipating a similar number for the holiday but possibly more.

"I'm new here and I didn't do this last year, so I don't know how many people we will get," Thomas said. "If I can gauge it by how many people we get a week, then around 125 meals."

"But it's hard to say, because when people know you are giving turkeys, the numbers can go up there."

See Food Pantry, Page 8A

Hiawassee PD investigating two possibly connected thefts at Antique Mall

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

The Hiawassee Police Department is looking for two suspects who stole an undisclosed amount of jewelry from the Hiawassee Antique Mall last week.

Suspect No. 1 is believed to be a small-framed white male who broke into the mall in the early morning hours of Sunday, Nov. 3, Hiawassee Detective Brandon Barrett said.

The suspect entered the building by smashing the window on the southwestern

See Thefts, Page 8A



The Hiawassee Police Department is looking for this man who was allegedly caught on tape stealing jewelry from the Hiawassee Antique Mall on Nov. 7.

GSP says Young Harris man at fault in Fire Department crash

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

A Towns County man has received two misdemeanor citations following a head-on collision with a Union County Fire Department vehicle on Nov. 1, according to the Georgia State Patrol.

Joey Bruce, 50, of Young Harris, has been charged with failure to maintain lane and failure to yield right of way to an emergency vehicle, according to GSP.

The accident occurred on Murphy Highway/US 129/Georgia 11 between Rogers Road and Nottely Marina at about 5:15 p.m. on Friday, Nov. 1, according to GSP.

Two local firefighters were in the process of responding to an emergency medical call as

See Crash, Page 8A



Joey Bruce at Erlanger Hospital after crashing into a Union County Fire Department emergency response vehicle on Nov. 1. Photo/Facebook

2 Sections 20 Pages
Lake Levels
Blue Ridge 1,672.75
Chatuge 1,919.21
Nottely 1,764.35

Arrests 2A
Chamber 7A
Church 5B
Classifieds 8B
Opinion 4A
Legals 8B
Obits 6B
Sports 2B

BASKETBALL
Nov 12 @ Nantahala
6 & 8 PM
Nov 15 @ Hiwassee Dam
6:30 & 8:30 PM

Firewise
at Mountain
Movers & Shakers

Samaritan's Purse
Operation Christmas Child
Dropoff
Dates and Times

Young Harris Tree Lighting
Dec. 6

See page 7B

See page 3A

See page 7A