

Towns County Herald

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GMF Christmas returns with \$100K in new displays

By Daysha Pandolph
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

As the Christmas season draws near, the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds is gearing up for another magical debut of its annual Mountain Country Christmas in Lights.

Beginning on Thanksgiving night, Nov. 23, the fairgrounds will light up from 6 to 9 p.m. each Thursday, Friday and Saturday until Dec. 9, then every night from Dec. 14-23. On Dec. 7, all Towns County residents can enjoy the event for free.

Every other night, for only \$8 per person, and free for children 12 and under, visitors can walk through the glowing winter wonderland, browse among the 62 different arts and crafts booths, and explore much more Christmas magic.

"It's really a fun event for entire families to come and enjoy," said Fairgrounds Gen-

eral Manager Hilda Thomason. "And we've added \$100,000 worth of new displays and lights this year."

Thanks to the Towns County Commissioner's Office, the 2023 Mountain Country Christmas in Lights will sport a brand-new LED ball, a walkthrough tunnel of lights and, of course, more decorative Christmas lights.

While the walkthrough lights show is definitely the main attraction of the event, not everyone is able to enjoy strolling through the hilly terrain of the fairgrounds.

For that, Thomason and her team have dedicated Tuesday, Dec. 5, to all seniors, the disabled and those in nursing homes. From 5:30-8 p.m. the gates will be open for those groups to drive throughout the park.

This isn't the only chance for those unable to walk to enjoy the lights, however. There

will also be golf carts driving throughout the fairgrounds to pick up handicapped or disabled visitors every night the event is open.

For children's amusement, the petting zoo Cowtown USA will also be open and includes a milking and butter-churning demonstration. For a small extra fee, kids can even ride a pony.

Along with the fun of milking cows, riding ponies and feeding farm animals, young visitors can find entertainment in several friendly holiday competitions.

An ornament-painting contest will give children an opportunity to win a cash prize, and for \$10, young girls can enter a Christmas Pageant in the Music Hall from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Dec. 16.

There will also be a special green guest at the fairgrounds this year, so be sure to See *Country Christmas*, Page 4A



GMF General Manager Hilda Thomason looks forward to the entire region attending the annual Mountain Country Christmas in Lights, which returns as always Thanksgiving night.

Henderson discusses annual 'Shop With The Sheriff'

By Daysha Pandolph
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

The Mountain Movers and Shakers gathered at the Sundance Grill on Friday, Nov. 17, for their weekly meeting, where they delved into the exciting world of Towns County law enforcement.

Sheriff Ken Henderson shed some light on the Shop With The Sheriff for Christmas Program his office puts on each year. The program has evolved over time from a toy donation drive to a more personalized experience for well-deserving children during the holidays.

With the original toy drive, the Sheriff's Office faced several obstacles. Many children wouldn't get the kinds of gifts they actually needed or wanted because the choices depended solely on what community members decided to donate.

Fortunately, this new approach has allowed children to make their own purchases with provided funds. This method also yields a heartwarming outcome because the children often



Sheriff Ken Henderson was thrilled Friday to receive more than \$800 in donations made by Movers and Shakers members for Shop With The Sheriff. Photo by Daysha Pandolph

prioritize their families in their purchases.

"Shop With The Sheriff is one of the most rewarding things that I have ever done,"

Henderson said. "It is just amazing. When you take those little kids to shop, the first thing they want to do is either buy some-

See *Shop With The Sheriff*, Page 4A

City Council, DDA take out \$1 million construction loan



Hiwassee City Council Members Jay Chastain Jr., Nancy Noblet, Amy Barrett, Patsy Owens and Anne Mitchell approved the Paris Business Center construction loan on Monday, Nov. 13. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

In a called meeting on Monday, Nov. 13, the Hiwassee City Council voted unanimously to cosign with the Hiwassee Downtown Development Authority for a \$1 million loan to complete "bare bones" construction of the Paris Business Center.

The DDA approved its end of the bargain in a meeting on Thursday, Nov. 9.

Speaking for himself

and Councilwomen Nancy Noblet and Amy Barrett, Councilman Jay Chastain Jr. read a statement prior to voting on seven documents related to the arrangement with the DDA.

"I'm agreeing to these contracts only to protect the city's receipt of federal grant money, but I don't approve of how the city has gotten here," Chastain said. "I don't agree with all the pieces of the project and feel backed into a corner to approve the loan as the

result of the actions of others and not approved by council. In other words, I'm doing this under duress."

Mayor Liz Ordiales asked City Attorney Thomas Mitchell, who was attending via phone conference, if any votes by Chastain under what he considered to be duress would be OK.

"Yes, as long as they vote for it," he said.

Chastain's statement was referencing Ordiales having See *PBC Loan Approved*, Page 5A

Volunteers add 500 bulbs to Holocaust memorial garden

By Daysha Pandolph
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Amidst the bustling hum of Hiwassee traffic on Thursday, Nov. 9, a dedicated group of volunteers tenderly nestled daffodil bulbs into the soil of Lloyd's Landing to memorialize children murdered during the Holocaust.

This local project, spearheaded by the City of Hiwassee and the Towns/Union Master Gardeners Association, is part of an international initiative called the Daffodil Project.

The Daffodil Project has planted 860,000 bulbs in 462 different locations across the world since its creation, with 1,000 of those bulbs in the Lloyd's Landing memorial garden. Following that Thursday's planting, 500 more bulbs now occupy the garden.

Though present-day local gardeners are separated by both miles and generations from the harrowing nightmare that unfolded in Europe over 70 years ago, they understand how important it is to preserve the poignant lessons of history.

For that reason, as part



Area resident Debra Bolle, left, joined Master Gardener volunteers recently to plant daffodil bulbs at Lloyd's Landing in memory of child victims of the Holocaust. Photo by Daysha Pandolph

of the event's outreach effort, each of the several community members who showed up that Thursday left with a short biography on one child who lost their life to the Holocaust.

Grace Howard, a Master Gardener Extension Volunteer, has been involved with the Daffodil Project since 2014 and is pleased with its results in the See *Daffodil Project*, Page 7A

School Board hears financial updates, principal reports

By Brittany Holbrooks
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Topics of interest in the November regular meeting of the Towns County Board of Education included financial updates and the success of recent events.

School Finance Director Myra Underwood said that revenues via Title Ad Valorem Tax from motor vehicle purchases "seem to be doing well," resulting in Towns County Schools receiving \$256,000 as opposed to 2022's \$250,000.

LOST collections are up also, coming in for the month of September at \$290,000 compared to \$273,000 for the same month last year.

"So, over August, September, and October, we received a total of \$898,000 compared to \$846,000 for the three months last year," Underwood said.

As far as the new grant-



Towns County Middle School Principal Dr. Connie Hobbs was happy to report all the good news being made by her staff and students in the Board of Education meeting earlier this month. Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

funded Agriculture Facility that's in the works, there aren't many major expenses associated with it yet aside from archi-

tectural fees, with bids remaining to go out. Underwood reported See *School Board*, Page 5A

2 Sections, 16 Pages

Vol. 94 No. 04

Lake Levels

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

Blue Ridge 1,670.68
Chatuge 1,918.88
Nottely 1,763.76

Kindergarten Turkey Letters See page 3B

NDO Home Heating Assistance See page 2A

TCHS Student of the Week See page 3A



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United
Community
Advisors

Country Christmas...from Page 1A



The Mountain Country Christmas in Lights highlights all the reasons people love Christmas-time – including the reason for the season.
Photo by Lowell Nicholson/2018

stop by Thanksgiving night for his first appearance! Speaking of guests, what would an event like this be without Santa Claus himself?

This holiday season, the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC has decorated Santa's Workshop, where he will sit and await visits from children each night.

Needless to say, there will also be plenty of music. On Dec. 2, the Oak Ridge Boys will perform, and tickets are still available for their concert.

Next, on Dec. 9 at 7 p.m., the Macedonia Church is giving a free performance of their Christmas Cantata. There is also a chance that guests

may be serenaded by carolers throughout the lights tour.

"We welcome any churches to come out and do caroling," Thomason said. "We would love for them to come participate and stroll through and sing Christmas carols. Just give us a call and let us know when you're coming."

Visitors can also gather to roast marshmallows and hotdogs over an open fire. If they're still hungry, there will be plenty of other food options such as hamburgers, chili and soups.

There will also be souvenirs for sale at the gates as people enter and leave.

"A big thank you to all the volunteers that come out and help support this," Thomason said. "And (thank you) to all of our committee members as well as our paint staff, who have been working so hard putting all the lights up."

"The detainees have really done a lot of work to get it all put up, too, and we appreciate everything everyone has done."

Moving out of the Christmas season and into the New Year, the fairgrounds is making big plans for 2024 with many concerts, so be sure to check out the details at <https://georgiamountainfairgrounds.com/>.

Shop With The Sheriff...from Page 1A



YHC Police Chief Robbie Rich explaining drone operations during a live demonstration of the technology at the Sundance Grill on Friday.
Photo by Daysha Pandolph

thing for their mom or dad, or their brother or sister. And it melts your heart."

The children's holiday adventure will occur Dec. 14 when they gather to eat pizza at one of the local masonic lodges around 3:30 p.m. before driving to Walmart at 4:30 p.m. for their shopping spree. Henderson invites the community to come help serve pizza or just watch the kids shop.

To offer a little more insight on the program, TCSO Administrative Supervisor Vicki Ellis took the microphone. She shared that the program focuses on kids from pre-K to fifth grade but does not shy away from accepting the younger and older siblings of the eligible children.

With 30 kids already registered through the School System and more expected in the coming weeks, Ellis emphasized their great need for donations.

"To give them what we need to give them, because of the rising cost of everything, we're still in desperate need of funds," she shared. "I went to Walmart just the other night to get an idea of (prices) walking through the toy section, and the prices of some of the same toys have gone up so much."

The Movers and Shakers showed their generosity Friday morning by passing around a hat to collect donations for the program, ultimately gathering \$882 to put toward the cause.

Afterward, the conversation shifted to other efforts of the Towns County Sheriff's Office, including "The Badge," a monthly newsletter fostering transparency in his organization.

The Badge includes a letter from Sheriff Henderson on the first page each month, as well as all of the latest drug arrest reports. The rest of the information varies from newsletter to newsletter.

Another intriguing addition at the Towns County Sheriff's Office is a high-tech drone that has played a vital role in aiding search missions, coordinating with the Fire Department and other first responder efforts.

While the Sheriff's Office already has access to several helicopters in the area, it is not always safe for them to take off. With a drone, only severe weather can prohibit it from taking flight. The drone can even fly in light rain and can

withstand winds up to its own highest speed.

Young Harris College Police Chief Robbie Rich, who is certified in drone operations, explained the drone's capabilities, which have been a huge asset to Towns County law enforcement and in surrounding counties.

On its last mission, the drone was able to locate five missing Boy Scouts in Union County with the help of several other local drones. In its most recent Towns County mission, the drone was able to alert the Fire Department of the location of a small wildfire on Bell Mountain.

Thanks to the drone's thermal sensors, the Fire Department knew which direction the fire was moving and was able to put it out fairly quickly. Along with these recent missions, it has been extremely helpful in tracking criminal suspects.

This particular drone has several key features: over five different types of thermal detection, wide and normal zoom, first-person-view cameras, a loudspeaker and a spotlight. Additionally, it has sensors to detect other objects in the line of flight.

There are also two remote controls to the drone, meaning that although it can be directed by only one person, it can be operated by a pilot on one remote while another person controls the cameras and sensors on the other.

After giving a general explanation of the drone, Rich went outside to set it up for a hands-on demonstration.

Also in the meeting, Henderson underlined his commit-

ment to tackling drug-related issues in the county and to increasing the budget to expand law enforcement resources, stressing the need for more deputies in the county.

Unfortunately, the current budget won't allow these deputies to make any more money here. This makes it hard to keep them in the area since so many surrounding counties offer bigger paychecks.

For example, Henderson shared that drug agents in the surrounding counties make \$31 an hour, while in Towns County they make \$20.75 an hour at most.

He plans to tackle this budgetary problem while continuing to focus on the drug issues in Towns County. In his first 2.5 years in office, his office made over 250 drug-related arrests.

"I had no idea what kinds of problems we had with drugs in this county," Henderson said. "I have made it very clear since I ran that I am going after these drug dealers, and we're going to put them in jail. And that's what we've been doing and I'm going to continue to do that."

Henderson also recounted a couple of other initiatives the Sheriff's Office has put in place, such as providing medication drop boxes to mitigate drug-related concerns and pulling vehicles over for routine safety checks.

At 9 a.m., Sheriff Henderson set down the microphone to usher the Mountain Movers and Shakers outdoors to watch Police Chief Rich demonstrate how he flies the Towns County drone.

Upcoming Adult Art/Craft Classes at Artworks Artisan Center

Mountain Regional Arts and Crafts Guild is excited to announce a full schedule of adult classes for the remainder of 2023. We will be adding more classes on our website throughout the year.

Classes will be held at ArtWorks Artisan Center, 243 Big Sky Drive, Hiawassee, GA.

December 7, 1 PM to 4 PM, Watercolor for Beginners: Holiday Cards, instructor Joyce Clair.

For more details about classes please visit our web-

site www.mountainartsandcrafts.org and click on events and classes. You can call Artworks at 706-896-0932 or stop by the store at 243 Big Sky Drive to register for classes. Classes are small and fill quickly.

Mountain Regional Arts and Crafts Guild brings regional makers of handmade crafts and original art together to collaboratively showcase and sell their work by sharing creative ideas and skills through networking and outreach programs.

Blairsville man arrested on methamphetamine charges

News Special
Towns County Herald

Recently, the Towns County Sheriff's Office conducted an investigation into suspected drug activity in the Macedonia area of Georgia 288.

During the investigation, a suspect was identified and found to be in possession of methamphetamine that field-tested positive and was confiscated.

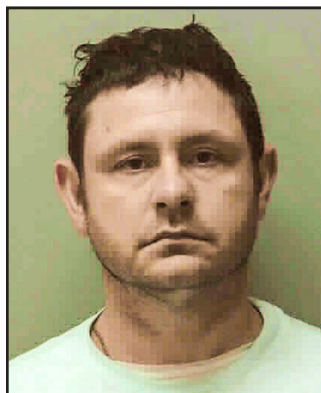
This resulted in the arrest of Justin William Holloway,

40, of Blairsville. He has been charged with felony possession of methamphetamine with intent to distribute and felony possession of methamphetamine.

Holloway is currently being held in the Towns County Detention Center without bond.

Sheriff Ken Henderson states the Sheriff's Office will continue to earnestly focus on drug areas.

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



Justin William Holloway



Towns County Sheriff's Deputies confiscated bags containing a substance that field-tested positive for meth during their recent arrest of Justin Holloway. Photo/Facebook

PBC Loan Approved...from Page 1A

ing signed a large contract amendment for the Paris Business Center project earlier this year in apparent violation of the city charter, that is, without the required consent of the City Council or review by the city attorney.

Project costs for the business incubator and restaurant ballooned this year when improperly approved changes were made to add, among other things, an expensive second-story outdoor dining area to one of the buildings.

With the loan agreement now in place, the scope of the project has been scaled back to finish the city-owned Paris Buildings in a "bare bones" manner.

As originally budgeted, the years-old project was to be completed without the need to borrow money; however, following COVID-19 pandemic-era cost increases compounded by significant recent changes to the project, the council faced two financial options.

Reject a loan, putting the city in a position of having to repay nearly the equivalent of the "bare bones" loan amount to cover already expended funds – including grant monies – while leaving the buildings to languish uncompleted and jeopardizing future grant opportunities after failing to finish.

Or accept the loan, which, as currently projected, will be paid for with SPLOST dollars earmarked for economic development plus rent monies from the various entities that will be utilizing the Paris Business Center upon completion.

That's why the three council members, who have opened an investigation into the mayor for city charter violations she has described as "a procedural error," felt "backed



Hiwassee Mayor Liz Ordiales in the Nov. 13 called city meeting. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

into a corner" – they didn't want to sacrifice future grant opportunities that greatly offset costs for city development.

Still, the arrangement will require the city to backstop loan payments with a property tax levy if the proposed funding scheme fails to meet the terms of the loan, which is something Chastain, Noblet and Barrett would not have agreed to normally.

Also in the meeting, the council approved a scope and retainer agreement for retired municipal attorney Dana Miles to administratively investigate the mayor, with Councilwoman Patsy Owens abstaining from the vote.

Miles' fees will be \$400 an hour to investigate, \$200 an hour for travel time, plus reimbursement for any out-of-pocket expenses related to the investigation. It remains to be seen how many billable hours he will accrue.

Council members also held a first reading of an or-

dinance to create the position of Paris Business Center Project Manager. The city will be hiring someone to oversee the project until it finishes construction, expected by May 2024, and is still looking into candidates for the position.

A second reading and adoption of the ordinance will take place at the next regular meeting in December.

At the end of the meeting, City Attorney Mitchell said that, with the loan agreement approved, he would be drafting the letter requested by Trailful Outdoor Co. regarding a proposed drainage fix at the Paris Buildings that will now be implemented during construction.

Trailful's owners have been asking for the city's written commitment to resolve a long-running stormwater drainage problem at the Paris Buildings that has negatively impacted their business' adjacent building, which they are planning to buy and restore.

School Board...from Page 1A

that the COVID-19 pandemic-era Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund III grant will finalize this year. Still, some new ESSER monies continue to come in.

"In September, they contacted us and sent some (special education) ESSER money, so evidently there's still all kinds of federal money out there and they're just manually sending it a little along," Underwood said.

Elementary School Principal Shannon Moss estimated that at least 500 people, including 233 students, attended the Family Fitness Fright Night last month. In other holiday-related news, third-graders can once again look forward to making gingerbread houses at Brasstown Valley Resort.

Next month, kindergarteners will have a big role to

play at the annual Young Harris Christmas Tree Lighting on the first Friday in December, performing "festive songs." Similarly, third, fourth and fifth-grade students will put on a play and enjoy choral performances on Dec. 5 and 7. As of Nov. 6, Elementary enrollment was at 440.

Middle School Principal Dr. Connie Hobbs revealed that winter sports are underway, and the gym floors have completed refinishing for home basketball games. Sixth-graders finished up their Space Unit with a pageant and launching rockets.

Seventh-graders, meanwhile, hatched 15 chicks after watching their growth in new incubators. Eighth-graders enjoyed "Book Character Day" and visiting TCES students. For now, there are about 40 students at TCMS with perfect

attendance. Middle School enrollment stands at 219.

According to TCHS Principal Bryan Thomason, 288 students attend Towns County High School. He also shared that the softball team won their first playoff game at Regionals in school history. Cross country boys placed Eighth at State, while the girls placed 14th.

The TCHS Band took part in several competitions in October and won their class category at the Blue Ridge Marching Music Festival.

"It was a big to-do. The kids were crying; I mean, they were tickled to death. I think they were all shocked," said Thomason with a proud smile. "It's awesome, and I know our kids are really enjoying being able to kind of show out a little bit."

For the Superintendent's Report, Dr. Darren Berrong said that while progress on the Agriculture Center is slow, the site has been approved for groundbreaking. Ideally, bids will start going out at the end of November, and construction will start in February or March.

The Towns County Board of Education meets on the first Monday of every month at the Towns County Middle and High School Library starting at 6 p.m.

Brasstown Valley Resort Arts and Crafts Show Thanksgiving weekend

Brasstown Valley Resort annual show is coming Thanksgiving weekend. Come out enjoy the decorated resort and the arts and craft show all three days. Bring the little ones along Santa Claus will be there all three days to come sit and visit.

Hours are November 24 - November 26; Friday 10-5; Saturday 10-5; Sunday 10-4. There will be crafts from throughout the southeast selling their wares. For more information call: 706-897-6179

Free parking and free admission.

Daffodil Project...from Page 1A

local area. “We planted the first bed in Union County at Meeks Park,” she shared. “(Then) I started looking for another place, and I knew I wanted it in the city: (Hiawassee Mayor Liz Ordiales) and I looked, and this is the place we found.” So, in October of 2022, the flowerbed at Lloyd’s Landing was created and dedicated to the Daffodil Project. Along with the active garden kept at the park during the summer,

the springtime daffodil blooms keep the quaint little area beautiful year-round. “This is just a project that has been very important to me, and I am honored to be a part of it,” Howard said. “I’m very pleased that the City of Hiawassee gave us this space to be a part of this big initiative.” While Howard was instrumental in getting the project going in the area, she couldn’t have done it without the support of her fellow Mas-

ter Gardeners and members of the community, like area resident Debra Bolle, who is moved by the history of the Holocaust. “I learned about (the Daffodil Project) last year,” said Bolle of Hayesville, North Carolina. “When I saw it in the paper the other day I couldn’t wait to come. I think it’s so worthwhile and people should memorialize (the children who died). I’ll be back to see it all in bloom.”

13th Annual Lake Chatuge Shoreline Cleanup Results



Young Harris College students (L-R), Emma, Emily, Vic, Connor, and Alanis show off their haul of trash after the cleanup



L-R: Devon Wilson, Carol Cherry, and Jeff Rogers cleaned the shoreline from a canoe and kayak.

MountainTrue hosted the 13th Annual Lake Chatuge Shoreline Cleanup on Saturday, November 4th. At this year’s event, 48 volunteers picked up 1,050 pounds of trash from lakeside public lands on both sides of the state line. The 13-year total is now 15.5 tons of trash. Thanks to everyone who participated, with extra gratitude to Tennessee Valley Authority for sponsoring the event. Also, the US Forest Ser-

vice, Blue Ridge Ranger District and Clay County Parks for transporting the trash to appropriate disposal sites and Towns County Government for use of the Swim Beach pavilion. We especially appreciate the participation of the Rotary Club of Lake Chatuge-Hiawassee again this year, as well as several students from Young Harris College. MountainTrue is a non-profit organization working in 26 mountain counties to cham-

pion resilient forests, clean waters and healthy communities. We engage in on-the-ground environmental restoration projects and policy advocacy at all levels of government. Primary program areas include water quality, public lands, land use/transportation, and citizen engagement. Visit our website to learn more: <https://mountaintrue.org/>. T(Nov22,F2)JH

Helping Law Enforcement with Christmas for the Kids



The Blairsville Cruisers Car Club has many programs in place to make sure local children in need have a Merry Christmas. To help the Towns County Sheriff’s department meet its goal of helping Towns County children our car club makes an annual donation. On behalf of the car club members who reside in Towns County we proudly make a \$1500 donation for the “Shop with the Sheriff” program. The Blairsville Cruisers is a 501c3 non-profit helping through its “Shop with a Cruiser” program taking 100 children, who otherwise receive little for Christmas, on a shopping trip to Walmart. In addition to this donation for Towns County the club also makes substantial donations for “Shop with a Cop”, Union



Blairsville Cruisers president Dick Couture presents a donation check to Sheriff Ken Henderson

County Sheriff’s “Give-a-Gift”, Clay County NC Sheriff’s “Cops 4 Kids” and other programs year around assisting children in need. The club has over 100 active memberships with about 50% residing in Union, 33% in Towns, 19% in Clay, NC county and a small % residing in other counties. The club also offers

scholarships for trade or technical school students in North Georgia and Western North Carolina. Details are on our website [www. BlairsvilleCruisers.com](http://www.BlairsvilleCruisers.com) The Blairsville Cruisers motto is “Cruzin for the kids”. Thanks to all our sponsors, donors and members for making our kids charitable efforts successful. T(Nov22,A6)JH

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	
11/14/23	Hunter Chase Adams, age 18, Young Harris, GA Failure to appear for fingerprintable charge-felony (2)
11/19/23	Jason Earl Barrow, age 43, Hiawassee, GA Possession of methamphetamine, sale of a schedule I or II controlled substance
11/19/23	Kimberly Faye Hall, age 36, Hiawassee, GA Possession of methamphetamine, sale of a schedule I or II controlled substance
11/19/23	Macayla Ann Laster, age 38, Hayesville, NC Possession of methamphetamine, purchase, possession, manufacture, distribution, or sale of marijuana (2), sale of a schedule I or II controlled substance
11/14/23	Grant Matthew Caldwell, age 35, Adell, GA DUI-driving under the influence of drugs, serious injury by vehicle

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.

Love Light Scholarship Donations

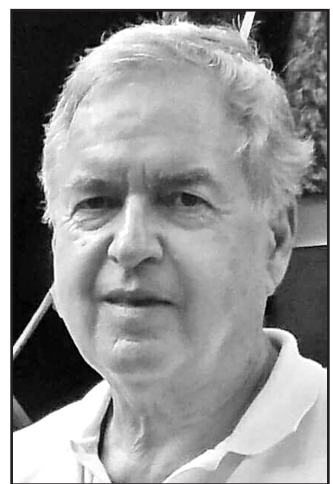
The Chatuge Regional Hospital and Nursing Home Auxiliary is requesting donations to fund our Love Light Scholarship Program. While we accept donations in memory or honor of individuals throughout the year, this is the time when we receive the most donations. The scholarships are awarded to deserving Towns County High School Seniors who will be entering the medical field. We also award to Chatuge Hospital/ Nursing Home employees working to further their education. Please return this form with your donation to: Love Light Scholarship, P O Box 986, Hiawassee, GA 30546.

Name: _____
 Address: _____

 Given in MEMORY of: _____
 Given in HONOR of: _____
 Acknowledgement to be sent to:
 Name: _____
 Address: _____

Frank Riley appointed to Blue Ridge Mountain Soil and Water Conservation District

Frank Riley of Demorest, GA was appointed on October 10, 2023 to represent Towns County on the Blue Ridge Mountain Soil and Water Conservation District. He will serve the Conservation District for a two-year term beginning October 10, 2023. Riley grew up on a farm in Taylor County, Georgia and learned the importance of taking care of the land at an early age. The 650-acre farm produced hay providing local farmers and surrounding counties as well as their own livestock and also grew soybeans. Riley is a third-generation farmer who also lives on his 170 acre farm in Hiawassee, Ga that has been in the family since 1854. He currently produces flowers and vegetables in two high tunnels that were installed through Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Environmental Quali-



ty Incentives Program (EQIP). He also grows sweet corn and sweet sorghum. Riley and his family have used many types of conservation practices on the farms; no-till drill, pollinator strips, and buffer strips. Riley has a Forestry Degree from Abraham Baldwin Agricultural

College and the University of Georgia and an MBA from the University of Georgia. Riley has been involved in the forestry industry for 52 years. He is the Executive Director of the Chestatee-Chattahoochee Resource Conservation and Development Council (RC&D). He created the Appalachian RC&D FAC Coalition which runs the Firewise and Fire Adapted Program in four states. He has served as the interim director for the Georgia Forestry Association and is a member of the FFA Foundation Sponsor Board. Riley travels the country continually learning about new ways to implement fire safety and then teaches others what he learns through workshops and hands-on training. He looks forward to sharing his experience and knowledge with the district and community. T(Nov22,A2)JH