

# Towns County Herald

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## Save-A-Lot robbed at gunpoint; authorities search for suspect

By Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

By press time Monday, the Hiwassee Police Department was working a lead and gathering evidence in an armed robbery of the Save-A-Lot Food Store on Wednesday, Nov. 22.

Armed robberies are rare in the area, and Hiwassee Police Chief Paul Smith said that he believes this crime to be an isolated incident.

"We have a pretty good lead at this point," said Chief Smith. "We're in the gathering and building stage, and hopefully that will lead to an arrest."

Hiwassee Police Sgt. Tracy James and Officer

Tony Verdone responded to the scene of the robbery at 8:25 p.m., within one minute of the 911 call that was placed by an employee of the Save-A-Lot after the robber had fled the scene.

Upon arrival, the two officers began an immediate search of the area, and Towns County Sheriff's K-9 Deputy Bloodhound Copper soon after attempted to track the suspect to no avail.

Authorities are considering the possibility that the robber made his way to a vehicle parked nearby to get away from the area.

As reported by the Save-A-Lot employees at the scene, a slim white male approximately 6 feet 3 inches tall appeared from the rear of

the store when it had closed.

The man wore a mask and brandished a handgun, and after locking one employee in the store cooler, he led the other at gunpoint to the store's safe, where he stole an undisclosed amount of cash before fleeing on foot.

Fortunately, neither of the employees was harmed during the incident, and though several nearby businesses went on lockdown after the robbery, no one else reported any related incidents.

The Hiwassee Police Department has been reviewing video footage and other evidence, and Chief

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A view from the parking lot of the Hiwassee Save-A-Lot. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

## Teachers of the Year highlight and promote positive school culture



Chris Vardo, right, receiving his TCMS Teacher of the Year award from Towns County Schools Superintendent Dr. Darren Berrong and TCMS Principal Erica Chastain. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

When eighth-grade Georgia history teacher Chris Vardo learned that he'd been voted in as 2017-2018 Teacher of the Year by his fellow educators at the Towns County Middle School, he was quick to give others credit.

"First of all, I believe that each teacher at TCMS is deserving of this recognition, because it is my opinion that the faculty and staff here are second to none in all of Georgia," said Vardo. "And to be selected by them is one of the greatest honors, and it truly is humbling."

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## Jimmy Smith honored for 21-year commitment to county youth



Jimmy Smith surrounded by family and friends in the Towns County Courthouse. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

By Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

Towns County Commission meetings always have a fair number of guests. The Nov. 21 meeting, however, featured a few more than the usual suspects.

Filling up the benches in the courtroom of the Towns County Courthouse that Tuesday were supporters of Jimmy Smith: his wife, Robin, and their children; other

members of his immediate and not so immediate family; former coaches and players; old friends and more.

They all had gathered to celebrate Smith, who recently completed his 21st and final year as director of the Towns County Youth Football program.

Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw once coached his own boys under Smith, and he wanted to offer the county's thanks for Smith's years

of service as a community leader.

"This is a little bit emotional for me, to be honest with you," said Bradshaw. "I'm going to try to hold it together right here, because there's some folks you know we have in our lives that mean a lot to us."

Continued Bradshaw: "This man is retiring after 21 years, and the county's

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## Sheriff's Christmas Parade brings community together for a cause



'Tis the season to be jolly, especially when a town gathers to watch a parade. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

By Lily Avery  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

On Saturday, Nov. 25, the Towns County Sheriff's Office held its annual Empty Stocking Fund Christmas Parade, and with Sheriff Chris Clinton at the head of the pack, a line of cars and floats headed out of the Georgia

Mountain Fairgrounds and toward Highway 515 to the Hiwassee Square.

Lead by Sheriff Clinton and the Towns County High School marching band, more than a dozen floats headed toward Downtown, lined with garland and lights, decked out to the nines with holiday festivities and full of Christmas joy.

Hundreds of Towns County locals and visitors lined the streets, anxiously awaiting the much anticipated yearly event. Bundled up in jackets, scarves, hats and gloves, the cold temperatures were greeted with smiling faces and laughter and adults and children alike watched beautiful float after

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## The Beach Boys to make first appearance at Fairgrounds

By Charles Duncan  
Towns County Herald  
Editor

The band that launched an entire genre of music known as "surf" is coming to Anderson Music Hall on Friday.

The Beach Boys, one of the most critically acclaimed, commercially successful, and widely influential bands of all time, will play the Hall on Dec. 1, one of the most anticipated music shows in Hiwassee history.

The band continues its decades of music today with longtime bandmates Brian Wilson, Al Jardine, Mike



Love, David Marks and Bruce Johnston.

Two of the Wilson brothers (original band members) passed away many years ago; Dennis drowned

in 1983 and Carl died of lung cancer in 1998.

The group had more than 80 songs charted worldwide, 36 as U.S. Top 40 Hits (the most

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## Christmas comes to the Fairgrounds with 'Mountain Country Christmas!'



Look, ma, it's Santa... in Christmas lights! Photo/Lily Avery

By Lily Avery  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

Christmas is less than a month away, and helping to create a fun, spirit-filled environment of joy and wonder is none other than the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds with its "Mountain Country Christmas in Lights!"

On Thanksgiving night, after all the turkey and pie had been enjoyed, patrons flocked to the Fair-

grounds for opening night of the light show, enjoying the thousands of twinkling holiday lights and the holiday spirit floating through the grounds.

Although it has only been opened for one weekend, the light show has already garnered more than double the attention it received during opening week last year, with more than 2,000 guests for the entire weekend.

"It's been wonder-

ful," said Hilda Thomason, Fairgrounds General Manager. "We had really good crowds all three days. Thursday, Friday and Saturday were all really, really good."

"Our paid attendance was about 2,500 and then with all those under 12 years old free and all of the volunteers and vendors, I'd say we had close to 5,000 people there this weekend."

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**Basketball**  
Nov. 28 vs. Fannin Co, 6 PM  
Dec. 1 vs. Providence 6 PM  
Dec. 2 @ Union Co. 6 PM  
**Wrestling**  
Dec 1-2 King of the Mountain

**Historical Society**  
**Surprise Program**  
**December 11th**  
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**Marines**  
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**Register Now**  
**For FREE**  
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