

The Haven Project of Georgia announces events for Individuals with Disabilities and their Families



Haven Project of Georgia

The Haven Project of Georgia, a Blairsville-based non-profit, is gearing up for its December events.

On Saturday, December 7th, from 1-2 PM at G&G in Blairsville, there will be a social group for area teens and young adults with disabilities to hang out and have fun together. Adults will be on hand to facilitate/supervise as needed, and Haven Project will pick up the tab for food and drinks for the group. Parents and other family members are welcome too, but the hope is to promote independence for the teen and young adult par-

participants to feel free to stay. To help Haven get a head count for planning purposes, please email havenprojectofga@gmail.com, leave a message on Haven Project of Georgia's Facebook page, or call 706-897-8940. If you would like to drop a family member off for the respite care event, please let Haven know ahead of time what types of assistance your family member may need so that they can help everyone have as good a time as possible. N1Dec4ZJCA

Senior Center Arts & Crafts Sale

Towns County Senior Center is having their annual Winter Wonderland Arts & Crafts Sale the entire month of December.

Please visit the Towns County Senior Center, located on Main Street in Hiawassee, Monday thru Friday 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. to shop and admire our arts and crafts handmade by our talented seniors. All proceeds will go to the Towns County Senior Center. T1Dec4F2JSH

Shop with a Hero...from Page 1A

the community," Ashe said.

At just 18 years old, Ashe is already making her mark as a strong community servant. Last year, she and other Future Farmers of America helped buy Christmas gifts for kids in the community, and it just warmed her heart seeing how happy the children were.

"Christmas to me is more about giving," Ashe said.

Following high school, Ashe said she plans on obtaining a specialized degree to pursue a career in nursing.

Of course, Hiawassee Police Chief Paul Smith knows that when it comes to the annual Shop with a Hero program, it takes a village to take a bunch of children Christmas

shopping.

The chief is not sure how many kids will get to go this year, as the program is still taking donations, and the amount raised dictates the number of participants, but thanks to Ashe, nearly a dozen less fortunate kids will benefit from the \$2,325 she and Stephens Lodge helped raise.

Students selected for Shop with a Hero will leave for Walmart for their special Christmas shopping experiences on Friday, Dec. 20, which is the last day of school before winter break.

This year marks the 10th year Smith has been taking the kids shopping alongside other first responder chaperones, and

they always make sure to end the long day of shopping with a lunch at a local restaurant.

"One great benefit from this is that it teaches kids that police are good people," Smith said. "I have developed relationships with kids from this program that have lasted years."

The Hiawassee Police Department is still taking donations for Shop with a Hero. Anyone looking to donate can visit the Police Department at City Hall, and checks should be made payable to Shop with a Hero.

For more information, call the department at 706-896-2888.

Parade...from Page 1A

passed by, tasty treats flew through the air, landing at the feet of children who raced as fast as they could to stock up on candy for later.

The hard work, dedication and Christmas spirit of float builders showed Saturday, as the crowds marveled at every passing float festooned with festive lights and other holiday decorations.

"We enjoy the parades throughout the year, but my kids especially like the Christmas parade," resident Jessica Gibson said. "It's nice to see our small town come together to celebrate Christmas and the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus."

Among the floats decked out with Christmas lights was the Towns County High School Bass Fishing duo of Adrian Hooper and Mitchell Grimsley, who just hours earlier finished First Place in a Georgia BASS Nation fishing tournament on Lake Chatuge.

Excitement built throughout the evening among parade-goers, children and their families as they eagerly awaited the arrival of the most important person of the parade in many people's eyes - Santa Claus.

As the parade got closer to the end, children and their parents pointed to the sky to wave to Santa Claus, who returned holiday greetings while tossing candy from the bucket of a Blue Ridge Mountain Electric Membership Corporation truck.



Santa Claus rode through the 2019 Empty Stocking Parade in a BRMEMC bucket truck over the weekend.

Photo by Lowell Nicholson

The purpose of the parade was to kick off the Empty Stocking Fund Drive, which encourages donations to provide presents to children who may otherwise go without gifts on Christmas morning.

"We got a good start, but we still have a long way to go," Sheriff Clinton said following the parade. "I'm sure we will come out on top just like we have every year. We've been very blessed with so many people in the community who step up to help out these kids each year."

It speaks to the character of the community coming together during the holidays to give back, Clinton said, noting that there are some very generous people who live in the county.

"I think they really care about one another and

particularly the kids," Clinton said, adding that he was extremely pleased with the turnout this year, even with the threat of rain.

The Towns County Lions Club finished the parade in Third Place, with National Title Pawn coming in Second Place and the Franklin High School Bass Fishing Team out of North Carolina finishing in First Place for the float contest on Saturday.

To help meet the goal of providing for children in need, each float builder and participant donated a new unwrapped toy as an entry fee in the parade.

Anyone looking to donate new unwrapped toys or funds can visit the Towns County Sheriff's Office in Young Harris or call at 706-896-4444.

Tree Lighting...from Page 1A

Two years ago, the big tree that served in the lighting for more than two decades died and had to be cut down, and so they began using a different tree to count down the occasion.

In the future, the city plans to use the Mayor Dan Nichols Memorial Tree, which was planted several years ago and still needs time to grow into a big Christmas tree for the lighting.

"It is a community event, and I think not only is it a long-term tradition going on for 40 plus years, but I really think that people need and crave and want community," Gibby said. "They want it this time of year, but I think especially in the last couple of years, where there are

all kinds of bad things going on in the world.

"This is just one of those really fun and positive community events that people can participate in, and at the end of the night, we all come together. I just think it's a really good feel-good community event."

Elaborating, the mayor said she believed Christmastime and the tree lighting were perfect examples of how human beings can gather in the name of something bigger their individual selves.

"I think it's about us really coming together and remembering we are all in this together and there is this possibility of peace," Gibby

said. "That may sound kind of silly to say, but there's glimpses of reconciliation in community time and people loving each other, and I think that's what the season is all about."

City employees helped to decorate for the event, with the inside of City Hall being decorated by the Enotah Garden Club to make the interior of the building festive.

Following the tree lighting, the Garden Club will host refreshments inside City Hall, and Santa will pose for pictures with children and take their Christmas requests.

The event will run from 6-8 p.m., and the Christmas decorations will remain up until the beginning of next year.

Wilkinson...from Page 1A

on the Georgia Chamber of Commerce's Legislative Scorecard for the 2018 Legislative Session.

In 2015, Sen. Wilkinson was awarded the ACCG Legislative Service Award and the Award for Legislative Advocacy by the Association County Commissioners of Georgia and the Georgia

Historical Records Advisory Council, respectively.

He was also named "Policy Maker of the Year" by the Georgia Association for Career and Technical Education in 2012.

In July 2017, he was presented the Outstanding Service Award by the Georgia Vocational Agriculture Teachers

Association and was later named the Region V national award winner by the National Association of Agricultural Educators.

The University of Georgia College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences honored Sen. Wilkinson with an Award of Excellence in 2009.