

Towns County Herald

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Young Harris City Hall to celebrate 48th Annual Tree Lighting

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

YOUNG HARRIS – Towns County children and parents alike are invited to join Young Harris Mayor Andrea Gibby and the ladies of the Enotah Garden Club for the city's 48th Annual Tree Lighting on Friday, Dec. 7.

Festivities will begin at 6 p.m. inside Mayor's Park, just out front of Young Harris City Hall, when Mayor Gibby delivers her traditional welcoming message filled with holiday cheer.

"The event is about community," said Mayor Gibby in the leadup to the big night. "Please join us to celebrate the season, gather with friends, have some fun and to see Santa."

Following Mayor Gibby's welcome, Rev. Katie Strals with Union Hill United

Methodist Church will lead the crowd in prayer, after which the musical portion of the evening will begin.

First, Towns County High School Band Director Arnold and a select group of students will perform a medley of Christmas tunes for everyone to enjoy.

Elementary School music teacher Cathy Seis and several of her kindergarten students will take over from there, with a number of young boys and girls singing an assortment of Christmas songs.

Of course, the Young Harris Tree Lighting wouldn't be a tree lighting without the lighting of the tree, which always takes place with a countdown from 10.

And children will want to keep an ear out for the ringing of sleigh bells, which will certainly mean that the Jolly Old Elf himself is drawing

near.

Fresh baked cookies will be available inside City Hall, where Santa will post up next to a decorated tree in Council Chambers to take Christmas requests from children.

The Young Harris Tree Lighting dates back to the year 1970, when the first one occurred across from the Post Office on College Street.

The lighting continued there for several years, though it eventually moved from its point of origin to various trees along Main Street.

Finally, in the late 1980s, the lighting found its permanent home in Young Harris Mayor's Park after City Hall was built on the land that former Young Harris Mayor Irene Berry left to the city.

Last year, the big tree that had served in the Tree Lighting for more than two decades died

See *Tree Lighting*, Page 7A



Children grabbing fresh-baked cookies during last year's Young Harris Tree Lighting event. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

Buchanan family continues to host annual Christmas lighting



The Buchanan Family Lights are a holiday tradition in Towns County and the surrounding area. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

By Jarrett Whitener
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Christmastime is a special time of the year for people the world over, a time that brings about a season of giving and coming together.

And fortunately for the North Georgia Mountains, places like the Buchanan family of 469 Scataway Road in Hiawassee display their love of Christmas year after year for everyone to see.

Robert Buchanan's love of Christmas lights took hold decades ago, when he received

a single strand of lights as a Christmas present.

Since then, Buchanan has entertained a steady fascination with lighting, continuing to grow his collection every year until he had well over 100,000 bulbs and numerous displays.

"It started with a few lights on the house and tree in the front yard," said Buchanan. "Over the years, we just kept adding to it and moving it until we got it to where it is now."

To finish putting the lights up in time for the Christmas season, Buchanan starts earlier in the fall to ensure

the completion of the display.

"I start putting up all the lights in September, when it's nice and warm outside," said Buchanan. "It takes a lot of time to get everything up and put together. I still have a few more things to get up before it's finished."

One tree, for example, took a couple of days to finish putting more than 20,000 lights on and fully decorating it.

The weather has served as an obstacle for Buchanan this year, with the rain making it harder for him to reach his goal of getting the lights up

See *Lights*, Page 7A

Reed-Smith shows Christmas spirit with miniature village



Reed-Smith has collected items for her Christmas Village for more than three decades. Photo by Mark Smith

By Mark Smith
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

In 1986, some 32 years ago, Linda Reed-Smith received her first miniature house as a birthday present from a close friend and co-worker at a Nielsen Business Products in Marietta.

"The little house was a little lonely, so I added a tree," said Reed-Smith. "And then it needed some people, so I added

people. And then they needed neighbors. And then the rest is history.

"I started getting them as birthday presents, Christmas presents, and I bought probably 80 percent of them. Ninety percent of them are Department 56 or Colonial Village, which is Department 56's competition."

Continued Reed-Smith, "And I have pieces with family

member's names. That's important to me. I try to collect and not only have a village, but a village that has family in it."

Ultimately, Reed-Smith's goal is to create a village of her own imagination, and she's doing an admirable job at it, having constructed a Christmas Village featuring nearly 150 houses and more than 600 people.

See *Village*, Page 7A

TCSO receives over \$25,000 in surplus police equipment

News Special
Towns County Herald

Santa Claus came early for Sheriff Chris Clinton and the Towns County Sheriff's Office.

On Monday, Nov. 26, the Sheriff's Office received over \$25,000 worth of donated equipment from the Sandy Springs Police Department.

Sheriff Clinton was very happy to get the donated surplus equipment for the Sheriff's Office.

The equipment received included the following items: six blue light bars for patrol vehicles; a tag reader; push bumpers; window bars; consoles; laptop brackets; dry erase boards; various blue light marker lights; and other miscellaneous items.

These items will be very beneficial in savings to the Sheriff's Office budget.

Sheriff Clinton thanks Sandy Springs PD for all the equipment received.



Towns County Sheriff Chris Clinton posing with thousands of dollars in equipment donated by the Sandy Springs Police Department.

Digital signs, insurance and more discussed in work session

By Mark Smith
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Terry Poteet, an officer of Visual Outdoor Signs, petitioned members of the Hiawassee City Council in their Nov. 26 work session to allow the conversion of an existing traditional billboard sign to a digital multi-message sign.

The existing sign is located behind Brown-Haven on Main Street and is a monopole, off-premises sign that actually supports four billboards stacked two over two.

Poteet said that, with today's technology, the brightness would automatically dim down at night.

The reason Poteet was See *Hiawassee*, Page 7A



Hiawassee Mayor Liz Ordiales in the Nov. 26 City Council work session. Photo by Mark Smith

Sheriff's Office arrests aggravated assault and drug suspect

News Special
Towns County Herald

YOUNG HARRIS – The Towns County Sheriff's Office, with assistance from the Office of the County Sheriff's Office and Hiawassee Police Department, arrested an aggravated assault and drug suspect at a residence on Sampson Road in Young Harris on Sunday, Nov. 25.

The suspect has been identified as Christopher Steven Ray, 34, of Murphy, North Carolina, and he was arrested on outstanding warrants from Towns, Union and Gordon counties.

Resulting from his arrest, investigators seized \$5,000 worth of methamphetamine, illegal Schedule IV and



Christopher Ray

Schedule II drugs, drug-related objects and cash.

Towns County Sheriff's Office investigators with trafficking in methamphetamine, possession of methamphetamine,

possession of methamphetamine, possession of Schedule IV drugs, possession of Schedule II drugs, possession of drug-related objects, and obstruction of law enforcement officers.

Investigators also served warrants on Ray from a previous encounter with him that occurred in Towns County earlier this year on Sept. 6, including warrants for possession of methamphetamine, three counts obstruction of law enforcement officers, and two counts possession of Schedule IV drugs.

The Gordon County Sheriff's Office had outstanding warrants on Ray for aggravated assault on a law enforcement

See *Arrest*, Page 7A

2 Sections 20 Pages

Lake Levels
Blue Ridge 1,671.05
Chatuge 1,918.33
Nottely 1,762.26



Inside	
Arrests	2A
Church	5B
Opinions	7B
4A	4A
Legals	8B
Obits	6B
Sports	2B

SPORTS
BASKETBALL
Dec. 4 @ Tallulah Falls 6 PM
Dec. 7 vs. Rabun 7 PM
Dec. 8. vs. Union 6 PM

Runoff Election Results will be available at
www.TownsCountyHerald.net

Yard Sale to benefit Students
See page 5A

Light UP Hiawassee
See page 2A