

# Towns County Herald

Legal Organ of Towns County

www.townscountyherald.net

Your Hometown Newspaper Since 1928

75 Cents

Publication Number 635540 Volume 94 Number 07

Wednesday, December 14, 2022

## School Board recognizes students in REACH program

By Jeremy Foster  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

Congratulations to Haylee Krokono, Miranda Ramirez and Aubree Snelling for becoming the first cohort of students from Towns County Middle School to be selected to the REACH Georgia Scholarship Program.

The three eighth-graders were honored in the Dec. 5 regular meeting of the Board of Education during a signing ceremony to make their entry into the program official.

REACH Georgia is a statewide needs-based mentorship and scholarship program that provides academically promising students with academic, social, and financial support to help

make their dreams of college and a bright future come true.

Students commit to the program in their eighth-grade year. Upon successful completion following high school graduation, they earn a \$10,000 scholarship toward the cost of attendance at a HOPE-eligible postsecondary institution in Georgia.

The program currently serves over 3,000 students in 180 school systems throughout the state. Selection as a REACH Scholar is a rigorous process, taking into account grades, behavior, attendance and more.

There is no cost to the school system to participate in the program, with fundraising coming through the REACH program and the Georgia Student Finance Authority. Superintendent

Dr. Darren Berrong said.

"It's a really good program for kids who are in need, and we are thrilled to be a part of it," Berrong said. "This was our first year and first three nominees for Towns County.

"We can nominate up to five kids per year, so we started with three just to go through the process and figure it all out. This will become an annual thing with us, so every year there will be more eighth-grade students who can get in, and I am excited to see how it pans out.

"This is a big deal for us, the kids, their parents, and the community. The great thing is that it has gotten to the point now where there is so much fundraising in the state that there is really

See REACH Scholars, Page 8A



TCMS REACH Scholars Miranda Ramirez, Haylee Krokono and Aubree Snelling with Superintendent Darren Berrong in the Dec. 5 School Board meeting.

## VFW hosts Pearl Harbor anniversary remembrance



Local veterans memorialized the anniversary of Pearl Harbor with an informal service and dinner at the VFW Post on Sunnyside Road Dec. 7.

By Jeremy Foster  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

The Veterans of Foreign Wars Garrett-Owenby Post #7807 of Hiawassee held a memorial BBQ dinner in remembrance of the victims of Pearl Harbor on Wednesday, Dec. 7 – the 81st anniversary of the attack.

That fateful date of Dec. 7, 1941, transpired with the Imperial Japanese Navy Air Service commencing a surprise

attack on Naval Station Pearl Harbor on the island of Oahu, Hawaii, causing the deaths of 2,403 U.S. personnel.

This hostile action by the Japanese catapulted the U.S. into World War II, prompting America to join the fight against the Axis Powers of Japan, Italy and Germany.

The locally held memorial service last week began with a simple prayer from Chaplain Scott Drummond reminding everyone that, "on this day 81

years ago, we were viciously attacked, and gave rise to our Greatest Generation, in which there are very few of those left amongst us."

Drummond asked that God look over them and their families and bless and protect those still wearing the various uniforms of the military today.

Post Cmdr. John Harkins then led the Pledge of Allegiance and offered some remarks of his own.

See Pearl Harbor, Page 8A

## Organized crime at work in North Georgia Mountains

By Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
Editor

Authorities are investigating suspected organized crime activity in the area after two incidents with similar details occurred last week in Union and Towns counties involving allegedly stolen digging equipment.

On Monday, Dec. 5, a male driver with a female passenger pulled up to Rick's Rental of Blairsville in a Chevy Tahoe looking to rent an excavator, Union County Sheriff's Lt. Lamar Dyer said.

The woman entered the business, presented her driver's license, filled out a contract and provided a credit card to pay for the rental, Dyer said.

After the equipment was hooked up and hauled away, the credit card declined, and the business contacted the Sheriff's Office Dec. 7 to say it could not



TCSO recovered this stolen digging equipment in a sting operation on Wednesday, Dec. 7.

reach the "customers." Dyer was able to connect the vehicle used locally to another incident that took place Dec. 6 in Morgan County, where three males were arrested

See Organized Crime, Page 8A

## Towns Co. Sheriff's Office continues with drug arrests

News Special  
Towns County Herald

The Towns County Sheriff's Office conducted a Highway Safety Check on Wednesday, Nov. 30, on Gumlog Road at Many Forks Church in Young Harris. Safety checks are a proactive approach to keep local roads and the community safe.

As a result, K-9 Deputy Dakota alerted on a vehicle, which was subsequently searched. Methamphetamine was confiscated and a passenger was arrested.

As a result of the arrest, Sheriff's Investigators and K-9 conducted a search of a residence, finding an amount of meth that was confiscated and field-tested. The results of the field test revealed meth laced with fentanyl.

Several stolen county road signs from Towns County and Clay County, North Carolina, were also recovered.

The following individuals were arrested and charged as follows:

Richard Robert Angelo, 29, of Young Harris, for felony possession of methamphetamine; felony possession with intent to manufacture, sell, distribute methamphetamine; felony possession of a firearm by a convicted felon; felony possession of a firearm during the commission of a crime; and misdemeanor possession of drug-related objects.

Savanna Linn Wages Silvey, 20, of Young Harris, for felony possession of methamphetamine and felony possession of a Schedule II controlled substance.

In a separate incident, the Sheriff's Office received information about a residence in Hiawassee that had marijuana growing inside the home. On



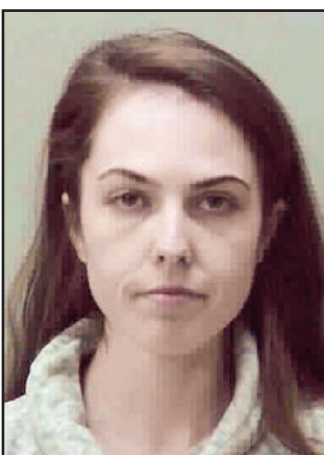
Richard Robert Angelo



Tristan Cable Brown



Savanna Linn Wages Silvey



Jaclyn Nicole Strachan

Thursday, Dec. 1, Sheriff's Investigators searched the house and found evidence of a grow operation with LED lighting set up.

An amount of marijuana was confiscated during the search, and Jason Wade Dolan, 39, of Hiawassee, was arrested and charged with felony possession of marijuana, felony manufacture of marijuana, and misdemeanor possession of

See Drug Arrests, Page 5A

## Chief Paul Smith resigns from Hiawassee Police

By Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
Editor

Hiawassee Police Chief Paul Smith announced his resignation in the Dec. 6 regular meeting of the Hiawassee City Council and Mayor Liz Ordiales.

Smith will stay on in the short-term to assist the city in selecting his replacement and offer training to the new chief to ease the transition.

The council and Smith shared an emotional moment inside City Hall as the departing chief read from prepared remarks that evening, noting his desire to spend more time with family and explore other career opportunities, at least for the time being.

"It has been a great honor to serve the City of Hiawassee, its citizens, its visitors, and the surrounding communities," Smith said. "I have known since I was a child, riding my bicycle on the sidewalks of this town, that I wanted to serve the community as a police officer.



Chief Paul Smith  
Hiawassee PD

"I was humbled and honored to be appointed as chief of police in 2017, and serving in this capacity has been the highlight of my career. Thank you for entrusting in me the responsibility of the position, for having faith in my abilities, and for providing your constant support.

"With great sadness and great joy, I submit my resignation as Hiawassee's Chief of Police. As a child in Boy Scouts, I learned the importance of leaving a place better than you found it. I believe that I have accomplished that goal with the Police Department.

See Smith Resigns, Page 3A

## Warnock wins runoff despite strong local support for Walker

By Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
Editor

Incumbent Democratic U.S. Sen. Raphael Warnock won the Dec. 6 General Election Runoff, beating Republican Herschel Walker by about 97,000 votes statewide. The defeated challenger conceded the race several hours after polls closed.

Starting in 2023, Warnock's re-election will produce the Senate's first party majority in two years with a 51-49 split in favor of Democrats.

Roughly 3.5 million Georgians cast ballots in the runoff election, down about

400,000 votes from Nov. 8 General Election participation. The turnout among all active registered voters for the General Election was 57%, whereas just over 50% of voters took part in the runoff.

Warnock won the race with 51.4% of the vote, garnering 2.8% more votes than Walker.

Here in Towns County, the results looked decidedly different. Of the 6,481 ballots cast locally, more than 80% of voters supported Walker over Warnock, showcasing the deep red leanings of the rural North Georgia area.

See Warnock Wins, Page 8A



Raphael Warnock  
U.S. Senator

2 Sections 16 Pages  
Lake Levels  
Blue Ridge 1,669.80  
Chatuge 1,917.84  
Nottely 1,761.08

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

SPORTS

BASKETBALL

Fri. Dec. 16 @ Aquinas

6:30 PM

Sat. Dec. 17 @ GSIC 1 PM

First Responders  
Coffee and Donuts!  
Dec. 15  
See page 2A

REMEMBER HONOR TEACH  
WREATHS across AMERICA  
December 17  
See page 6A

Hiawassee Chanukah Celebration  
Dec. 19  
See page 4B

# Chief Smith Resigns...from Page 1A

"I feel a great amount of pride in how we have grown as a department, and it is difficult to say good-bye. However, I am looking forward to a new chapter in my life, where I can dedicate more time to my wife (Michelle) and son (Jacob), and explore new career opportunities.

"I know that each of you understand the personal sacrifices that are made when entering public service, especially when in a leadership position.

"In keeping with my goal to leave the department better than I found it, I hope to be a part of selecting my successor and assisting them during the transition period.

"I will be available to help the chief whenever needed and will continue to be an active part of this great community."

Following his address, Councilman Jay Chastain Jr. wiped tears from his eyes, saying, "We hate to lose you," and Councilwoman Anne Mitchell seconded his remarks.

After the meeting, Mayor Ordiales said she was "stunned" when Smith advised her of his resignation but accepted his decision.

"Being in law enforcement for the past few years has not been an easy task," Ordiales said. "We wish Paul all the best for his new chapter, and I know he is looking forward to spending more time with his family.

"We will search for a new police chief and hope to have that position filled in the near future."

Smith graduated Towns County High School in 2003 and went on to study criminal justice at Kennesaw State University.

While in Kennesaw, he joined the Cobb County Police Department in 2006, finishing top of his class at the police academy there.

He stayed with Cobb County for three years before

moving back to Towns County in 2009 to be closer to home, since he was looking to start a family.

Upon his arrival, Smith went to work as a deputy at the Towns County Sheriff's Office, and in 2010, he came on board with Hiwassee Police under Chief Jimmy Wright.

Smith quickly moved up in rank, first under Chief Wright, who promoted him to corporal, then sergeant, and then under Chief Arvel Walls, who promoted him to lieutenant.

Walls took over as chief after Wright's death in 2015 before retiring for health reasons in 2017, paving the way for Smith to achieve his goal of eventually serving as the city's police chief.

"I had always pictured retiring from the city," Smith said last week.

But things change, and Smith's desire to spend more time with his family – his son is 10 years old and growing fast – on top of the shifting national sentiments around policework and even the job itself contributed to his stepping away from law enforcement.

"The stress of the position interfered too much with my personal life with my family," Smith said. "Ultimately, my primary responsibility is as a father and a husband, and the job was taking too much away from that."

In addition to the support he and the department have received from local members of the public, Smith noted a particular highlight of his time at Hiwassee PD has been heading up the "Shop With A Hero Program," where local first responders take schoolchildren Christmas shopping.

"That is one of the greatest things I've done in my career – it's so much fun," Smith said. "I'm sad this is going to be my last one that we're doing on Dec. 16."

As for next steps following his last day as chief, likely to occur in the first couple months of 2023, Smith will be taking on a management position at Trailful Outdoor Co. in Downtown Hiwassee and focusing on growing his wood crafting



Paul Smith showcasing one of his handmade wood crafts available through his business Smith Orchard Crafts.

company at smithorchardcrafts.com.

In terms of his legacy as Hiwassee Police Chief, Smith is proud of the work his department has done to combat drugs inside the city limits, and he wishes to be remembered for "making the department a more professional department with new policies and procedures and technology."

"I hope it continues in that direction as a steppingstone for the next chief to do even bigger and better things," Smith said.

Importantly, Smith still plans to stay involved in local law enforcement. He will be maintaining his P.O.S.T. certification so that, after a brief hiatus, he may return if needed to help the city out when, for example, officers need to take vacation days.

"I've given 16 years of my life to the communities I've lived in, and that's not going to change," Smith said. "I'm going to continue to play an active role, whether it's through policing or other community organizations. I care so deeply about this community that I want to be involved in whatever way I can."

Currently serving alongside Smith at the Hiwassee Police Department are Sgt. Tracy James, Det. J.R. Murray, Ofc. Bill Conway and Ofc. Jose Carvajal.

**CLASSIFIED ADS SELL!**  
Call 706-896-4454 or tcherald@windstream.net

# West Printing Company 706-745-6343

- Forms?.....YES**
- Business Cards?....YES**
- Labels?.....YES**
- Signs?.....YES**
- Blueprints.....YES**
- Name Badges.....YES**
- Custom Note Cards...YES**
- Invitations.....YES**
- Letterhead.....YES**
- Envelopes.....YES**
- And MORE!**

*Need Blueprints?*

*Scan and Print, or Scan and Email services available*

*Your Hometown Printer since 1975*

**See Allison or Kenneth**

**Same building as the North Georgia News  
266 Cleveland St. • Blairsville**

## City Officials complete Georgia Municipal Association Human Resources Administration Certificate Program

Eighteen officials from cities across Georgia recently completed the Georgia Municipal Association's (GMA) Human Resources Administration Certificate (HRAC) program, equipping them with the knowledge and skills to successfully recruit, train and retain top talent for their communities.

This five-class HRAC course was held in Duluth and instructed by GMA, LGRM staff, and Cities Human Resources Directors. In addition to teaching how best to build a strong team of city employees, HRAC also expands upon previous GMA human relations training. Upon completion of the course, participants should: Understand all relevant employment laws; Understand the importance of recruiting, onboarding, and professional development in attracting and retaining the right people for the right job; Understand how to compensate and provide benefits to employees; Understand how to develop personnel policies; and Understand how to address employee performance and workplace culture.



**Hiawassee Mayor Liz Ordiales receives Certificate**

Any elected or appointed city official can take the course. Still, it targets city clerks, department heads and mayors, and council members who may have to address human resources administration. The courses required to earn the Human Resource Administration certificate are: Person-

nel Law; Talent Management; Performance Management; Compensation and Benefits; Personnel Policies.

GMA is proud of each participant in the HRAC program for furthering their professional education and serving Georgia's cities. T1Dec14.Z10/CA

## Hiawassee Garden Club November 17th Meeting

Members of Hiawassee Garden Club got quite a lesson in bee-keeping at their November 17, 2022 meeting from Bruce Hendrix. He and his wife, Jolene, have bee hives in Bonaire (near Warner Robins) and Hiawassee, GA and sell all kinds of honey products under the name, The Honey Hustle. You may have seen Jolene at the Georgia Mountain Fair, or any of the area craft shows, and at the Towns County Farmers Market. She has a great following for her bottled raw honey, flavored creamed honeys to eat and honey body butter for your skin, plus small gift packages with samples of each of her items.



**Bruce and Jolene Hendrix**

sunflowers, blackberries, bee balm, echinacea, snap dragon, and hostas, as well as a number of wildflowers like California poppies and evening primrose. Surprisingly, some flowers and trees are hard for them to get nectar, such as crepe myrtles.

In the business part of the meeting, President Debbie Nichols thanked hostesses, Amy Barrett, Maddie Botting and Frances Dyer for refresh-

ments. She also welcomed guest Inda Tinney.

The Christmas Luncheon will be held at the Clubhouse on Thursday, December 15, at noon. There will be soups, chili, sandwiches, salads and desserts.

Please bring a guest to enjoy all this food and the brain-stumping games Cheryl Gehring has up her sleeve. Lots of fun! T1Dec14.A4/JH

## Towns Union Master Gardener Association celebrates 2022



**Several Towns Union Master Gardener Association members working at Kris Kringle Market**

The Towns Union Master Gardener Association would like to thank the community for another great year. We are grateful for everyone who stopped by our Kris Kringle Booth and purchased our nature made ornaments. From angels to owls and everything in between, our master gardeners created many beautiful ornaments from a variety of materials. We used milkweed seed pods, acorns, sweet gum tree seed pods, anise seed, dried flowers, pistachio seed, pinecones and okra just to name some of the materials. We host two fund rais-

ing events annually, the ornament sale at the Kris Kringle Market along with an annual plant sale in the spring. These funds help make it possible for us to support several gardens in Towns and Union County. We get our hands in the dirt at the Gold Medal Garden at the Farmers Market in Union County, the Towns County libraries in Young Harris and Hiawassee, the Pollinator Garden at the Forest Service, the Children's Memorial Daffodil Gardens both in Union and Towns County, the list goes on and on. We also give support to our 4-H students in both

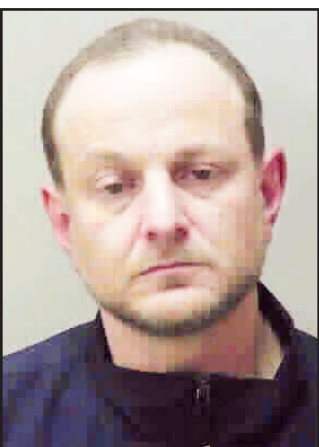
Towns and Union County.

We enjoy speaking with the many residents that stop by our Ask a Master Gardener Booth at the Union County Farmers Market every Saturday, all summer long.

As we celebrate our successes for 2022, we celebrate you, our community, for the gracious support you provide every year. We wish everyone a happy, healthy, and blessed holiday. We look forward to seeing you in 2023! Thanks again.

Submitted by MG Gayle Kujuk on behalf of all our Towns-Union Master Gardener Association Members.

## Drug Arrests...from Page 1A



**Nicholas Sean Swisher**

drug-related objects.

In another unrelated incident from early Saturday morning on Dec. 3, a Drug Investigator, Uniform Patrol, and K-9 Deputy executed a search of a residence in Old Forge Estates Subdivision in Hiawassee.

As a result of the search, methamphetamine was confiscated and field-tested positive.

Ricky Dale Roddy, 61, of Hiawassee, was arrested and charged with possession of



**Jason Wade Dolan**

methamphetamine.

Also a separate incident, early in the morning on Sunday, Dec. 4, Drug Investigation and K-9 Deputies conducted a traffic stop on Konahetah Drive.

The K-9 alerted to drugs being in the vehicle, which was searched, and methamphetamine and ecstasy were discovered. Both drugs field-tested positive.

Nicholas Sean Swisher, 48, of Clayton, was arrested and



**Ricky Dale Roddy**

charged with felony possession of methamphetamine, felony possession of MDMA (ecstasy), and misdemeanor possession of drug-related objects.

Sheriff Ken Henderson said he and the Towns County Sheriff's Office are committed to taking these dangerous drugs off the streets and out of the hands of young children.

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

# Pearl Harbor...from Page 1A

“It was the Greatest Generation, and it was the last war that we’ve won,” Harkins said. “The biggest impact of Pearl Harbor was that we were ill-prepared for war, and even though leadership is still lacking, I think it helped us learn how to be more prepared for the future in some ways, and it takes strength to create peace – peace through strength.”

“I am proud to have been born in the middle of World War II and served in the military, and very glad to be standing among the veterans here who are the heart of our country. I

love our country and I want to see it last forever.”

The floor was then opened for thoughts and comments around the room.

“When it happened, everything was destroyed and we were devastated,” past Post Cmdr. Mel Halfon said. “But we persevered from the mistakes they made by bombing us on a Sunday morning where a lot of people were off duty or on leave.”

“So, they did not kill as many as they could have, and not bombing the oil fields with the fuel tanks and by attacking

us in the harbor where the water was shallow.”

American Legion Post #23 Cmdr. Randal Forehand added, “I just want to say thank you to everybody who was there and remembers that time, and everyone who has served since.”

“If it wasn’t for Pearl Harbor, we’d all be speaking German today,” said Bill Collins of former Coast Guard service. “We never declared war on Hitler, but he declared war on us because of Pearl Harbor, so in that respect, my analysis is that, ultimately, good came out of evil.”

# Organized Crime...from Page 1A

“Upon searching the vehicle – a 2001 Chevrolet Tahoe w/Texas temp tag – drugs, guns and money were seized,” Madison Police continued. “It is believed that the vehicle was used in multiple thefts of rental equipment in the Atlanta area.”

Madison Police came into contact with the woman who was in Union County on Dec. 5, and Dyer, who questioned the woman over the phone, asked Madison authorities to take her into custody to face arrest here.



**Dekarius Christopher Pitts**

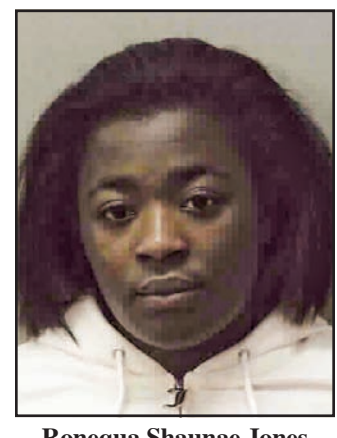


**Jontavius Clark**

Kendra Ashley Simmons of Stone Mountain was arrested Dec. 8 on a felony theft by deception charge. She was released from the Union County Jail over the weekend on a \$30,000 bond.



**Zackeri Alexander Leonard**



**Ronequa Shaunae Jones**

According to Dyer, Simmons claims to be a victim of circumstance, having been offered a job by the male driver whom she had only just met earlier the day of the crime, and that he essentially used her to rent the equipment.

Unfortunately, the equipment taken from Rick’s Rental was reported as having been abandoned on the side of Interstate 20 near Madison, and it had yet to be recovered by press time.

spect attempted to ram our patrol units. We are very fortunate one of our officers was not seriously injured or killed as one of the suspects, wearing an ankle monitor, was out on bond from DeKalb County for murder.”

Towns County deputies were able to successfully initiate a felony stop at the intersection of US 76 at Georgia 66, and four suspects inside the truck were taken into custody without incident.

charged with felony possession of stolen property; felony possession of a firearm during the commission of a crime; and possession of marijuana.

Jontavius Clark, 23, of Decatur, was charged with felony theft by conversion; felony obstruction of a law enforcement officer; felony fleeing and attempting to elude law enforcement; felony possession of a firearm by a convicted felon; and no valid insurance.

The Sheriff’s Office is continuing to investigate the whereabouts of the equipment and identity of the driver, UCSO Capt. Daren Osborn said.

In a separate incident on Wednesday, Dec. 7, a Towns County resident reported to the Towns County Sheriff’s Office that he was in the process of purchasing a Kubota Excavator from an individual valued at \$23,000.

“The suspects were heavily armed with two 10 mm handguns with extended magazines, which were confiscated,” the Sheriff’s Office said.

Dekarius Christopher Pitts, 22, of Dacula, was charged with three counts of felony aggravated assault on law enforcement officers; felony fleeing and attempting to elude law enforcement officers; felony tampering with evidence; felony obstruction of a law enforcement officer; felony theft by conversion; reckless driving; no valid insurance; driving on a suspended license; failure to maintain lane; and further charges are pending.

Ronequa Shaunae Jones, 22, of Decatur, was charged with felony possession of stolen property.

Towns County Sheriff Ken Henderson commended his deputies on the stop last week.

“Their training and experience paid off to avoid a dangerous felony stop,” Sheriff Henderson said. “Investigators indicate this is an organized crime ring out of the Dekalb/Lithonia area, and the investigation continues.”

The resident became concerned that the equipment might be stolen, so TCSO opened an investigation and determined that the equipment had been rented out of Tennessee.

“Wednesday evening, a sting was set up to purchase the equipment,” the Towns County Sheriff’s Office said. “The transaction was made by an undercover Towns County Investigator, after which the individuals attempted to flee and attempted to run over one of our Deputies.”

“A felony pursuit began on Highway 17/76 toward Young Harris and continued for two and a half miles where speeds did not exceed 60 mph. “During the pursuit, the

Zackeri Alexander Leonard, 22, of Stockbridge, was

Investigators with the Union and Towns sheriff’s offices met on Friday, Dec. 9, to discuss how the two cases may be related.

All of the individuals above have been charged only and are presumed innocent until found guilty in a court of law.

# REACH Scholars...from Page 1A

no cost to the county or anybody in the school system, so it’s just a fantastic program for the kids.”

Also in the Dec. 5 meeting, the board decided to change up its leadership positions for the 2023 calendar year.

2022 Board Chair Brandon Grimsley will be stepping down from the role, making room for Stephanie McConnell to assume chair duties starting in January. Board Member Caroleen Woods will move into the vice chair position that is to be vacated by McConnell.

The December meeting served as Board Member Stan Chastain’s final meeting, as David Phillips won election to the seat earlier this year after Chastain decided not to run again. Phillips will assume the seat in January.

Another exciting piece of news from the meeting was that the most recent College and Career

Ready Performance Index scores saw the Middle School ranking No. 1 in the Pioneer RESA District.

CCRPI is “a comprehensive school improvement, accountability, and communication platform for all educational stakeholders that (promotes) college and career readiness for all Georgia public school students,” according to the Georgia Department of Education.

Baseball dugouts are nearly finished and are getting bricked up on the outside as well as the new maintenance building that is soon-to-be completed.

In his Superintendent’s Report, Berrong said that the security systems project with CENTEGIX “should be up and running by January.”

“It’s all installed,” Berrong said. “Everything is now in the building, and (we’re) getting the software put on all of the

computers, so this is a great need for us to be able to handle emergency situations more efficiently and effectively.”

CENTEGIX is a technology company that specializes in incident response systems via its “CrisisAlert badges.” Now, all school staff will have emergency signal push buttons located directly on the backs of their identification badges to summon first responders in a crisis.

“Everything is looking great,” Berrong said of the 2022-23 school year. “It has been a fantastic year, and we are excited for everything going on into the New Year.”

Towns County Schools will break for the Christmas and New Year’s holidays following early release on Friday, Dec. 16. The School Board will meet next on Monday, Jan. 9, starting at 6 p.m. in the High/Middle School Media Center.

# Warnock Wins...from Page 1A

Towns Countians cast 5,201 votes for Walker versus 1,280 for Warnock, with 62% of the county’s 10,435 active registered voters participating in the Dec. 6 runoff, compared to the 71% local turnout in the General Election.

Like the November election, Towns easily made the Top 10 among the state’s 159 counties for highest voter turnout in the runoff.

In many ways, Georgia has become a purple state, contributing to the likelihood of split-ticket voting, e.g. the electorate simultaneously ushering in Republican state leader-

Unofficial Towns County Runoff Results						
December 6, 2022 • Votes By Precinct*						
Candidate	Young Harris	Hiwassee	Absentee and Advance Voting included in Precinct Totals	TOTALS	Percentage	
<b>US Senate</b>						
<b>Herschel Junior Walker (Rep)</b>	1660	3633	292	3139	<b>5193</b>	<b>80.29%</b>
<b>Raphael Warnock (I) (Dem)</b>	446	829	200	852	<b>1275</b>	<b>19.71%</b>

ship and Democratic federal leadership.

As demonstrated in Towns County, the partisan makeup of Georgia’s increasingly purple political

environment seems to be a tale of geography versus population density; the state is redder on a map but bluer in highly populated areas like Atlanta.