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Firefighters break bread; Commissioner Bradshaw honors Bruce Berrong

By Chad Stack
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Local churches from the Hiawasse Baptist Association hosted a Christmas dinner for Towns County Fire Rescue on Friday, Dec. 13.

The Hiawasse Baptist Association, which is made up of 13 local churches, welcomed firefighters and first responders that Friday, with each of the churches preparing food and refreshments for firefighters and their families to enjoy.

Firefighters left their gear and boots at the fire station to take some time to gather the firefighting family around fellowship and good food, as McConnell Memorial Baptist Church hosted the dinner and an awards ceremony.

A special part of the gathering included Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw honoring Firefighter Bruce Berrong, who passed away on

Nov. 20 following a battle with illness.

In an emotional presentation to the Berrong Family, Bradshaw proclaimed that the county was retiring Berrong's radio number 914 and making Sept. 14, or 9/14, a day of remembrance for Bruce Berrong.

Also that evening, McConnell Memorial Baptist Lead Pastor Steven Taylor praised the efforts of the men and women who put their lives on the line to save the lives of others.

"Every time there's a need, every time there's an accident, you are the ones who run to the problems, rather than running away from them," Taylor said. "We cannot thank you enough for all that you do for our county."

Fire Capt. Travis Gibson followed Taylor's welcome with an invocation, after which everyone broke bread with

one another and experienced fellowship with members of the local churches.

Earlier this April, Firefighter Jerry Baldwin and members of the Hiawasse Baptist Association started discussing the possibilities of having a Christmas dinner, McConnell Memorial Associate Pastor Danny Byers said.

Following the talks, the Hiawasse Baptist Association decided collectively that it wanted to make the dinner happen.

Firefighters received accolades that evening for the number of calls they responded to throughout the year.

Responding to 220 calls, which was the third highest this year, was Royce Nicholson. Next up was Robert Lownie with 221 calls, though Scott Kerlin finished the year on top with 273 calls responded to.

Many individuals were
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Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw presented family members of recently departed Firefighter Bruce Berrong with a special tribute in the Dec. 13 Firefighters Christmas Dinner at McConnell Baptist. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

Sheriff's Office comes together for annual Christmas dinner

By Chad Stack
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

It is widely known that first responders and law enforcement never take a day off, even on Christmas.

That's why Towns County Sheriff Chris Clinton chooses to honor his employees with an annual Christmas Dinner, welcoming deputies, jailers, office staff and their families to a nice meal together.

This year's gathering took place on Tuesday, Dec. 10, at the Civic Center. After thanking everyone who helped make the annual Christmas dinner a reality, Clinton asked his father Mike to say grace before people lined up to receive their food.

And everyone chipped in, with some people cooking dishes for the event, though a lot of the food was donated by local churches and restaurants.

As everyone piled their plates high, Gary Lindblom and Ash Todd of the local Veterans Band played Christmas tunes for everyone to enjoy while eating.

Members of the



The Towns County Sheriff's Office handed out awards to these deputies and jailers at the annual Christmas party on Tuesday, Dec. 10. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

Towns County Citizens Law Enforcement Academy volunteered to serve food and help with anything else needed that Tuesday night.

Following dinner, several detention center employees and deputies were recognized for their hard work and dedication to the Sheriff's Office.

Chief Deputy Terry Conner presented awards to the detention center officers

first, honoring Jailer Josh Baldwin as Rookie of the Year. Unfortunately, Baldwin was unable to attend the dinner because he was working that evening.

"There's a lot to learn in a jail, and it's difficult just by you're having all kinds of stuff thrown at you," Conner said.

Following the Rookie
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Rotary, students team up to bring free library to Hiawasse Town Square



This free phone booth library on the Hiawasse Town Square was built by Towns County students and sponsored by the Rotary Club of Lake Chatuge-Hiawasse. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

By Jarrett Whitener
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The Rotary Club of Lake Chatuge-Hiawasse teamed up with Towns County High School students to convert an old phone booth into a free library that now resides on the Hiawasse Town Square.

After months of hard work, students met with Rotarians and city officials to

install the library along the main walkway nearest River Street on Friday, Dec. 13.

"The Rotary does things sometimes to promote literacy, so this is just a project from the Rotary Club to help with that goal," Rotarian Cheryl Barrett said. "I contacted Sabrina Garrett - she's the Vo-Ag instructor at the high school - and she agreed to take on this project with her students."

"We looked online at various places, and she found this telephone booth somewhere down south. She went down there to pick it up, and her and the students have been working on it since early October."

"This is a great central location, and we did it here specifically because of the handicap parking, and it is right in front of the walkway. We
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Historical Society holds last meeting of year, elects 2020 officers

By Chad Stack
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Members of the Towns County Historical Society gathered for refreshments, trivia and some Christmas cheer at their last meeting of the year on Monday, Dec. 9, at 6 p.m. inside Historical Society Headquarters at the Old Rec Gym.

Society Secretary Tyler Osborn updated members about the local family the society is sponsoring for Christmas this year.

"The family was chosen by Elementary School Principal Dr. Sandy Page," Osborn said. "It's completely anonymous to us. We don't know the family; they don't know that we're the ones supporting them."

Members are encouraged to donate gift cards from local businesses such as Ingles or Daniel's Steakhouse, Osborn said, with money or gift cards



Historical Society Vice President Jerry Taylor showed off a few recent historical document donations at the group's Dec. 9 meeting. Photo by Chad Stack

coming from Walmart to be used to purchase items for the family.

Society President Sandra Green praised Osborn for all

his hard work over the past two months helping with the Haunted Jail and the Old Rock Jail Christmas Open House.

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American Legion, VFW bring Christmas to Brasstown Manor vets

By Chad Stack
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

For the seventh year running, more than a dozen volunteers with American Legion Post 23, Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 7807, both groups' auxiliary units and spouses hosted a Christmas party for veteran residents of Brasstown Manor on Thursday, Dec. 5.

Volunteers from local veterans service organizations visit with veterans at Brasstown Manor every month, with the December visit being a terrific opportunity to hold a special Christmas celebration for the residents.

American Legion Chaplain Scott Drummond said the party was meant to honor the veterans living at Brasstown Manor who had served their country.

Serving as the master



The December veterans visit at Brasstown Manor featured live Christmas music by volunteer veterans Gary Lindblom and Ash Todd. Photo by Chad Stack

of ceremonies that Thursday, event organizer Dick Metzler of the American Legion introduced Pastor Dwight Moss - a Vietnam Veteran and Purple Heart recipient - to deliver the

invocation.

Brasstown Manor resident and veteran Bill McClain led the Pledge of Allegiance, followed by some
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Lake Chatuge Chamber celebrates members at year-end meeting

By Jarrett Whitener
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

The Lake Chatuge Chamber of Commerce hosted a "Denim & Pearls" Membership Meeting on Thursday, Dec. 5, at The Retreat at Hiawasse River.

As always, the December meeting served as a chance for the chamber to review the past year in Towns County and celebrate the membership and various chamber accomplishments.

Melanie Hughes is the one retiring board member for the year, and she was recognized by the chamber for all the hard

work she has put in during her time on the board.

Chamber President Candace Lee said that, for the first time in all her years at the Chamber of Commerce, all board members who had the chance to serve a second term chose to do so.

"Which means they serve two 2-year terms for a total of four years," Lee said. "All of them re-upped this year, leaving one position open. That has never happened in my 14-year history with the chamber. Melanie was more than just a board member; she is a fantastic volunteer and a great resource."

The open position for the board was filled by Sue Deering, who hopes to help Towns County grow and continue to thrive over the next few years.

"I had a lot of push from a lot of people to do this, because I participate with a lot of the functions that go on in the area," Deering said. "I live in Towns County, and they wanted me to be part of the board, so I decided to see what the community says."

"This is my second year running, and I finally made it. I love it down here, and I hope to give back to my community
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Several local businesses and entities received special recognition for being 30-year chamber members in the Lake Chatuge Chamber's Dec. 5 annual meeting. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

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7 PM

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