

# Merry Christmas

from the Staff of the Towns County Herald  
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## Shop with a Hero volunteers take 34 kids Christmas shopping

By Mark Smith  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

Amy Gibby Rosser of Towns County Family Connection and members of the Hiwassee Police Department met up with other volunteers to take 34 Towns County kids Christmas shopping at the Blairsville Walmart on Thursday, Dec. 20.

It was an early release day for the students, who would be going home from this year's Shop with a Hero to start Christmas break.

And these kids, for whatever reason, would otherwise probably have had no Christmas at all.

Every year, the good people at Family Connection, a Zell Miller legacy organization,

bring in volunteers and officers with Hiwassee PD to partner up with kids to shop for Christmas.

This year was no different. This year, thanks to the generosity of the people of Towns County, Family Connection was able to give each kid \$200 to buy almost anything they wanted.

"So, the girl that I was with purchased gifts for her entire family," said Hiwassee Mayor Liz Ordiales, one of the volunteers. "Her sister, a bike; grandpa, a hat; her grandmother, a blanket; her mother, a charger for her phone; and then she bought herself a comforter."

Another volunteer, Dakota Wade, said he, too, witnessed kids buying presents

for their family members.

"We went and got the kids presents and let them have a good time," said Wade. "The guys I had were awesome. They usually try to take care of everybody in the household. We're lucky to have good kids around here."

Towns County first responder Travis Gibson further testified to the unselfish nature of the kids who went shopping that day.

"It touches your heart to see it," said Gibson.

Another volunteer who asked not to be identified said that he was "floored" that the children were worried "more about their siblings and their mother and father than they were about themselves."

He continued, "Here's an

opportunity for you to go out and get spoiled, get pampered for the day, and they choose their family over themselves. I mean, that's good character, that's strong character. That's something you only get in good school systems and good parenting."

Hiwassee Police Chief Paul Smith said that this had been a terrific year for fundraising thanks to all the generous support from members of the community and folks from out of town, too.

"We got to bring some extra kids, and that's always fantastic," said Smith. "I think we had a good turnout, lots of volunteers. We're grateful to everybody who donated to this event."

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Mayor Liz Ordiales with Amy Gibby Rosser of Towns County Family Connection during the Dec. 20 Shop with a Hero event at the Walmart in Blairsville. Photo by Mark Smith

## Federal judge resets jury trial for Heaton, Gowder brothers to April 8

By Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
Editor

GAINESVILLE – U.S. District Judge Richard W. Story reset the jury trial in the federal prescription drug case against Mike Gowder, Dr. David Gowder and Dr. James Heaton in a pretrial conference on Wednesday, Dec. 19.

The new specially set trial date is Monday, April 8, 2019, and the trial is expected to last between one and two weeks.

None of the co-defendants in the case were present for the proceedings at the U.S. Courthouse in Gainesville last week, though attorneys for all three men attended the discussions.

Initially, the trial had been scheduled for Feb. 11, 2019, but following the establishment of that date, Donald F. Samuel, Heaton's attorney, filed a "Consent Motion to Continue Trial."

In the motion, dated Nov. 16, Samuel asks the judge to reconsider the trial date for two



An exterior view of the U.S. Courthouse in Gainesville, which was the scene of a Dec. 19 pretrial conference in the federal case against Mike Gowder, Dr. David Gowder and Dr. James Heaton. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

main reasons:

1. The government had indicated it would be pursuing a superseding indictment with new charges against which his client would need more time to prepare a defense, and;

2. Scheduling conflicts had arisen with two of Samuel's

other cases, one federal and one state.

Regarding the first reason, Assistant U.S. Attorney William McKinnon said in the Dec. 19 proceedings that the prosecution would be presenting its case for a

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## Bradshaw welcomes Junior Board of Local Government Officials



Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw recognized students on the Junior Board of Local Government Officials in his Dec. 18 county meeting. Photo by Mark Smith

By Mark Smith  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw hosted the Junior Board of Local Government Officials in his regular monthly meeting, recognizing each member that Tuesday, Dec. 18.

The Junior Board is

a group of Towns County High School seniors who have expressed an interest in their local government and subsequently volunteered to learn about how their local government works.

"Tonight, we have most of the Junior Board of Government Officials here," said Bradshaw. "These are

great students. These are great kids. And I know every one of them very well. I've watched them grow up, and I'm very proud of them.

"When I was running for office, my own son, Trent, asked, 'What does a commissioner do?' And then I had other kids ask, 'What does

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## EMC Board discusses term limits, rates and meeting days

By Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
Editor

YOUNG HARRIS – The Blue Ridge Mountain EMC Board of Directors revisited director term limits in the December regular board meeting.

Term limits came up as a topic conversation following a discussion about the cost of board training.

Several directors undertook board training recently, the costs of which can start to add up over time – it costs roughly \$10,000 just to cover the required training of newly elected directors, not to mention additional costs for further training.

The concern among some of the directors was that, by the time they had completed all their training and settled in to understanding their duties and responsibilities on the board, it was either time for another election or they would be facing the max term limit, thereby wasting the cost of training.

Several years ago, the membership voted to impose a three-term limit on director positions. This was meant to prevent people from serving lifetime directorships on the



Jeremy Nelms

board.

Some directors wondered in their Dec. 11 board meeting if, in hindsight, maybe the membership should have thought to tack on a couple more terms to the limit or otherwise lengthen how long a term would last.

In turn, this would allow for an increase in the knowledge base among directors at any given time, as well as optimize the investment of training board members.

The discussion was not an agenda item and contained no action items but was simply a spontaneous conversation among board members.

Also in the meeting, the

board discussed the possibility of implementing a revenue-neutral rate adjustment – not to be confused with a rate increase – sometime in the near future.

Historically, in order to keep customer charges down, local power companies across the board have located some of the fixed costs associated with running a power company, i.e. the trucks, computer systems, employees, substations, powerlines, etc., in the volumetric, or usage, side of power bills.

The reason this is problematic, said EMC General Manager Jeremy Nelms, is because energy consumption has gone down thanks to a variety of efficiency measures over the last decade, all the while fixed costs have continued to increase.

To address this, Nelms told the board he has begun preliminary work on developing just such a revenue-neutral rate adjustment, wherein fixed costs baked into the usage side of member power bills would start to be shifted back to the fixed cost side, taking into account a corresponding drop in per kilowatt-hour electric rates.

Ultimately, Nelms said the goal of the revenue-neutral

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## Towns County a good place to ring in the New Year's holiday

By Jarrett Whitener  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

With the calendar about to kick back over to January once again, many people may find themselves wondering what they're going to do to celebrate the New Year's 2019.

Fortunately, there are plenty of activities around the county and area for people to partake in come Dec. 31.

In Towns County, some local businesses and organizations plan to provide New Year's experiences for the community to enjoy, including the Sand Bar and Grille in Hiwassee.

"New Year's Eve is going to be phenomenal," said Manny Carrion, owner of the Sand Bar. "We've got the band Whiskey, Stills and Mash playing until 1 in the morning, we have a free champagne toast at midnight, and this is going to be North Georgia's largest fireworks show at midnight."

"I don't know of (any other business) doing fireworks, let alone as big a show as we are going to put out for this area. It's free admission and you get a live band, champagne toast, and a firework show. It's going to



The Sand Bar in Hiwassee will host a New Year's Eve party complete with a huge firework show on Dec. 31

be awesome. It's going to be phenomenal."

This event starts on New Year's Eve at 2 p.m. and lasts until around 1 a.m. after folks ring in 2019 together.

The Sand Bar also has a New Year's Day cornhole tournament that the public is welcome to sign up for and attend.

"This is the first annual Polar Bear Cornhole Tournament," said Carrion. "We will play in snow, rain,

shine – no matter what the weather is. This is for the hardcore cornhole players that are going to brave the conditions to hold the trophy of the 2019 Cornhole Champions. The winner actually gets a night stay in Asheville, North Carolina, so it will be a fun time."

The tournament begins at 10:30 a.m., and those interested in participating can call 828-371-4781 to register a team. See New Year, Page 6A

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