

WISH YOU A HAPPY NEW YEAR 2023



Towns County Herald

Legal Organ of Towns County

www.townscountyherald.net

Your Hometown Newspaper Since 1928

75 Cents

Publication Number 635540 Volume 94 Number 09

Wednesday, December 28, 2022

Celebrate New Year's with area events



By Brittany Holbrooks
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

2022 is about to become a thing of the past as the holiday season transitions into a celebration of all things new. And fortunately, there's plenty to do locally when it comes to ushering in the New Year.

People from all walks of life are looking forward to coming ever closer to pushing past COVID-19 and enabling more time with family and friends in 2023. As such, many organizations and businesses between Union and Towns are helping to bring forth the new calendar in style.

From music and dancing to fireworks and drinks, there's a little bit of something for everyone if you know where to

look. Perhaps the biggest of those "somethings" is at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds, where the Christmas lights will linger just a bit longer before ringing in 2023 with the annual New Year's Fireworks Show.

On Saturday, Dec. 31, at 5 p.m., the Fairgrounds will open to the public with craft vendor stands as well as a car show courtesy of the Blairsville Cruisers Car Club.

The fireworks will go off at about 8:45 p.m., and vendor stalls will close shortly before then to give everyone a chance to watch the night sky light up. In the meantime, guests can warm up at firepits and enjoy hot chocolate, hot dogs, and hot hogs in the form of barbecue.

As always, admission to the fireworks is free, with a rain

date of Sunday, Jan. 1, 2023, in the event of inclement weather.

Paradise Hills Winery Resort and Spa will be hosting a private party at the Vine Overlook, \$85 per person. Attendees will enjoy live music by Chris Carpenter along with "holiday swag" that includes traditional party goodies like noisemakers, sunglasses and hats on Saturday.

Similar to the Fairgrounds' celebration, the Winery will be holding its toast early at 6 p.m., considering the owner's Belgian background; 6 p.m. in North Georgia corresponds to midnight in Western Europe.

Granddaddy Mimm's Distillery of Blairsville will be dropping a barrel instead of a peach Dec. 31. Starting at 6 p.m.

See New Year 2023, Page 3A

'Bomb cyclone' plunges temperatures nationwide

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

For more than half of the U.S. population, the arctic blast that swept across the nation over the weekend painfully brought to mind the Christmas classic, "Baby, It's Cold Outside."

Dubbed a "bomb cyclone," which is technically defined using barometric pressure readings, the cold air front that moved in from Canada caused dangerously frigid conditions from border to border, disrupting everything from flights to power for many Americans.

Closer to home, the millions of people who draw power from the Tennessee Valley Authority were subjected to multiple periods of planned rolling blackouts Dec. 23 and Dec. 24 to keep the electric grid from collapsing from the widespread and sustained "record-setting temperatures."

North Georgia Mountains residents didn't experience the coldest temps on record here, but the swing was wild, going from a high of 44.5 degrees on Friday to a low of 2.1 degrees



"Steam fog" occurs over a lake when cold, dry air mixes with warm, moist air from the water's surface, as demonstrated here on Lake Chatuge Friday. Photo by Robert Grace/Facebook

as the winter weather took hold, with Saturday's low approaching zero at 0.3 degrees.

To manage increased home heating demands brought on by the prolonged, widespread cold – and to avoid a repeat of the massive electricity generation failure from a 2021 winter storm in Texas that

resulted in nearly 250 deaths – TVA enacted an emergency plan it calls "Step 50."

TVA generates the electricity transmitted to the Blue Ridge Mountain Electric Membership Corporation, and as the co-op explained Friday, "TVA has implemented Step 50 of its

See Winter Weather, Page 5A

Hiawassee lights 12-foot menorah for Chanukah

By Jeremy Foster
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

The Hiawassee Town Square hosted the first ever local "Chanukah Celebration and Public Menorah Lighting" on Monday, Dec. 19, to highlight the rich history and start of the eight days of the Jewish tradition.

Chabad of Rural Georgia helped organize the event. An Atlanta-based nonprofit under the leadership of Rabbi Chaim Markovits, Chabad of Rural Georgia focuses on connecting Jews "who live away from the established Jewish communities."

Chayala Markovits, wife of Rabbi Chaim, opened the event by thanking everyone "for coming together and reminding us how special and important Chabad of Rural Georgia is."

"There are people all over that are looking to connect with other Jewish people that don't have a strong infrastructure and celebrate the holiday of Chanukah," she said.

Continuing, she thanked people for "making this such a beautiful event so far," and expressed gratitude for Hiawassee Mayor Liz Ordiales for supporting the event and Gerry Gutenstein for transporting from Atlanta the giant menorah used in the lighting.

Local attorney Larry Sorgen offered a short prayer and



Chabad of Rural Georgia hosted a public menorah lighting for Chanukah on the Hiawassee Town Square Dec. 19. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

reading from Psalm 121, noting that "my help is from The Lord, the maker of Heaven and Earth who will not allow the foot to falter," ultimately delivering the message that "the Lord will guide your soul to eternity, Amen."

"It's a special night tonight as we continue the very long tradition," Ordiales said to those gathered. "On the first night of Chanukah in 1975 in San Francisco, the very first public menorah lighting was lit.

"That was, of course, to celebrate the feat of rededica-

tion (of the Second Temple), and here we are 44 years later to light the 12-foot menorah (and honor) inclusion for all races and religions, and that will continue to be top of the line for me while I am mayor of this city.

"I think it's very important, and I strongly believe that all of us need to be a part of a great community ... The differences we have I think unite us versus dividing us, therefore I would like to proclaim Dec. 18-26 as the Days of Chanukah Festival of Lights."

See Happy Chanukah, Page 6A

District Attorney Langley talks to Movers & Shakers

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

Enotah Judicial Circuit District Attorney Jeff Langley stopped into the weekly breakfast meeting of the Mountain Movers & Shakers earlier this month to offer a rundown on the goings on of his office.

Langley ran unopposed in the 2022 General Election, meaning he will swear into his fourth four-year term in January, and Movers & Shakers Organizer William "Scotty" Scott congratulated Langley on another successful run for office that Friday, Dec. 2.

"I've been a prosecutor here in this Enotah Circuit ... for 24 years," Langley said. "I'm very honored that, if I don't get hit by a truck or a bus between now and Jan. 1, as of the first workday in 2023, I will be the longest serving DA in the Enotah Circuit history."

Continuing, "Right now, I have a staff of about 27 people. I have 11 assistant district attorneys who help me



Jeff Langley
District Attorney

prosecute cases. Technically, we've got over 5,000 cases pending in my four counties.

"I'd qualify that by saying about 1,400 of those are really somewhat dormant; these are people with outstanding bench warrants, they're on pre-trial diversion, their cases are on hold for some reason. But that still leaves us 4,300

cases or so that we're actively working."

Going into the financial aspect of running his office, Langley said he has funding to staff 11 assistant district attorneys. Unfortunately, finding people to fill these roles for the pay on offer can be difficult.

See Enotah DA Langley, Page 5A

Driver charged in car attack that caused bodily injury

News Special
Towns County Herald

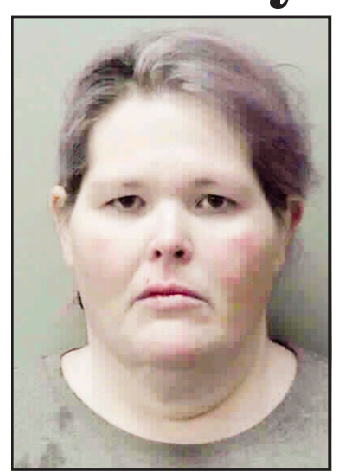
On Friday, Dec. 16, the Towns County Sheriff's Office received a domestic call at a location in Hiawassee.

A deputy en route to the location observed a vehicle swerve off the roadway in an aggressive manner to intentionally run over a female. The vehicle struck the individual, causing bodily injury.

The driver, identified as Samantha Aguirrie Beck, 40, of Hiawassee, was arrested without incident.

The victim was transported to a local hospital. Georgia State Patrol was contacted to work the traffic incident.

Beck has been charged with aggravated assault, driving under the influence of drugs, disorderly conduct, failure to



Samantha Aguirrie Beck



Royce Lee Beck

drive within a single lane, and improper backing.

Also arrested without incident was Royce Lee Beck, 40, of Hiawassee, for terroristic threats and acts.

The Georgia Division

of Family & Children Services was called, and the care of the injured female and another child were turned over to them.

All subjects are presumed innocent until found guilty in a court of law.

2 Sections 12 Pages

Lake Levels

Blue Ridge	1,665.39
Chatuge	1,916.11
Nottely	1,759.39

Inside

Arrests	2A
Church	3B
Classifieds	5B
Opinion	4A
Legals	5B
Obits	4B
Sports	2B

SPORTS

BASKETBALL

BATTLE OF THE STATES

DEC. 28-30 @ TCHS

Towns County

Tentative

Budget &

Called Meeting

See page 3A

TCREA

Education

Scholarships

Available

See page 2A

Atlanta

Rhythm

Section

Tickets on Sale

See page 6A

New Year 2023 ...from Page 1A

and running until 12:30 a.m., the "First Inaugural Blairsville Bash" will feature three bands, including distillery proprietor and country music artist Tommy Townsend himself.

Guests can dine on traditional New Year's foods like collard greens, black-eyed peas and cornbread, or they can sample some peach cobbler and ground-smoked barbecue from Jim's Smokin' Que.

A Groovy Bus will be shuttling folks from the Downtown Square to the distillery, and in addition to karaoke, celebrants can enjoy a caricature artist, professional photography, and a big screen TV to watch the Georgia Bulldogs take on the Ohio State Buckeyes starting at 8 p.m.

Everything except for food and drinks will be free, and food tickets can be purchased at the distillery or www.granddaddydymimms.com while supplies last. Dinner will be available from 7-9 p.m. It's suggested to dress warmly, considering live music will be outside with the fireworks.

The Ridges Resort on Lake Chatuge will be busy celebrating 2023 in two locations, including at The Oaks Lakeside Kitchen, where a Great Gatsby-themed gathering will see DJ Keenan Carter spinning tunes from 9 p.m. to 1 a.m.

Guests can choose between two three-course Prix Five seating bookings, the first at 6:30 p.m. for \$65 per person to feature a quieter experience, and the second at 9:30 p.m. for \$95 per person with wine paired with each course.

And Marina Station is back with another themed New Year's Eve party. This time, guests are encouraged to dress in their best cowboy (or cowgirl) getup to come enjoy some music by the Gregg Erwin Band from 9:30 p.m. to 1:30 a.m.

Food will be available until 10 p.m., and after that, the fun goes on with all sorts of party favors before being capped off by a champagne toast at midnight.

There will also be a New Year's Day celebration at the Station, to include build-your-own bottomless mimosas from



This week we have Cosmo for our Dog of the Week! Cosmo is a 1 year old male. He's very sweet, and loves to play. He's a medium size dog and would do great in any environment! He plays well with other dogs, loves attention and water. He is laid back and has a great demeanor. If you would like to meet Cosmo please call the shelter at 706-781-3843.



Meet Primrose. She is a 1 year old tabby. She loves to snuggle and play. She is great with other cats and would fit in perfectly to any household. If you would like to meet her, come by the shelter. We are open Monday-Saturday from 10:30 AM to 3 PM.

All of the animals adopted from the Mountain Shelter are spayed/neutered, microchipped, have received preventative deworming and flea treatments, and all vaccinations (including rabies) appropriate for their age, as well as any other medical care required to make happy, healthy, pets. Please be sure to check out our website, www.pawsga.org. NT(Dec28,24)CA

Aid for Animals

Animal Rescue Financial Support, Inc. (ARFS) financially supports needy animals and those who care for them. Please help us care for homeless, hungry, and hurting animals by sending a donation to ARFS, P.O. Box 972, Hiawassee, GA 30546. All donations are tax deductible. Got questions? Email us at info@arfs-inc.org or call us at 762-294-9467. TT(Dec28,A1)JH

10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Jan. 1. Those still recovering from the night before can partake in a brunch featuring specials like "The Big Boaters Breakfast," "The Angler Omelet" and "The Station Standard."

Finally, over at the Brasstown Valley Resort in Young Harris, the annual New Year's Eve Gala will offer an "exclusive" way to welcome 2023. Those 21-and up may walk into an "enchanted forest" in business formal attire and enjoy live music per the Atlanta Production Band.

Brasstown Valley's Gala begins at 7 p.m., with the bar opening at 7:30 p.m., along with

a gourmet dinner buffet serving up seafood, salads, lambchops, and carved strip loin, plus dessert and other luxurious fare.

Dancing begins with more upbeat music at about 8 p.m., and folks can enjoy party favors like those offered at other events until the balloons drop at midnight. For the sports-inclined, the football game will be on in the room directly beside the gala so guests can move between partying and watching.

Unfortunately, all of the \$679 overnight rooms have been sold out, but guests can still purchase party-only couple's packages for \$325. To make a reservation, call 1-800-201-3205.

Happy New Year!

NOTICE OF CALLED COUNTY MEETING

TOWNS COUNTY WILL HOLD A CALLED COUNTY MEETING on Thursday, December 29, 2022 at 10:00 am at the temporary facilities of the Towns County Administrative Offices and Courts located at 900 Main Street, Hiawassee, GA for the purpose of adopting the 2023 Tentative Budget and to amend the 2022 Final Budget.

CLIFF BRADSHAW
COMMISSIONER

TOWNS COUNTY GENERAL FUND 2023 BUDGET

JANUARY 1, 2023 THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 2023

BEGINNING BALANCE	6,200,000	Fines and Forfeitures		EXPENDITURES:	
REVENUES	13,015,275	INDIGENT ATTORNEY FEES REIMBURSED	1,500		
BEGINNING BALANCE & REVENUES	19,215,275	RESTITUTION	200	General Government	
EXPENDITURES	13,948,060	CLERK OF COURT	175,000	COMMISSIONER	167,725
ENDING BALANCE	5,267,215	MAGISTRATE FEES	10,000	ELECTIONS	107,000
REVENUES		PROBATE JUDGE	90,000	ADMINISTRATION/GENERAL	1,051,350
PROPERTY TAX	4,900,000	BOND FEE/JAIL	5,000	TAX COMMISSIONER	349,350
T.A.V.T.	950,000	Charges for Services		TAX ASSESSOR	318,800
ALTERNATE AD VALOREM TAX	15,000	INMATE ROOM AND BOARD	3,500	BOARD OF EQUILIZATIONS	7,000
ALTERNATE AD VALOREM TAX FIRE	1,500	AMBULANCE SERVICES	525,000	COURT SYSTEMS	
PRIOR YEAR TAX	140,000	TRANSFER STATION COLLECTIONS	900,000	Regional Expenses	320,500
REAL ESTATE TRANSFER	90,000	METAL SALES	5,000	Clerk of Court	260,100
REAL ESTATE TRANSFER TAX FIRE	10,000	CARDBOARD SALES	3,000	Probate/Magistrate	323,900
LOCAL OPTION SALES TAX	2,250,000	GAS SALES	2,000	District Attorney	149,850
BEER AND WINE TAX	90,000	PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION FAREBOX FEES	9,500	PUBLIC SAFETY	
LIQUOR TAX	25,000	AVITA TRANSPORTATION FEES	9,000	REGIONAL EXPENSES	232,900
BANK OCCUPATIONAL TAX	10,000	RENTALS	20,000	SHERIFF	1,633,740
INSURANCE PREMIUM TAX	750,000	RECREATION	45,000	RESOURCE OFFICERS	128,045
FIRE TAX	455,000	PICKLEBALL REVENUE	7,500	JAIL	1,593,450
PRIOR YEAR FIRE TAX	15,000	RECREATION DEPT SPONSORSHIPS	2,500	COURTHOUSE SECURITY	126,400
INTEREST AND PENALTY ON TAX	30,000	RECREATION CLASS REVENUE	14,000	FIRE	515,150
MOTOR VEHICLE FEES & PENALTIES	35,000	RECREATION USAGE FEES	500	ANIMAL CONTROL	104,525
Licenses and Permits		CHATUGE CAMPGROUND	175,000	EMS-AMBULANCE SERVICE	1,534,700
PLANNING COMMISSIONER REVENUES	7,500	SHERIFF FEES	15,000	AMBULANCE PURCHASE	170,000
BUILDING INSPECTION FEES	100,000	BEER AND WINE FINGERPRINT FEES	200	EMA DIRCTOR	61,500
SIGN PERMIT FEES	500	COMMISSION	190,000	911 MAPPING	50,350
BEER/WINE/LIQUOR LICENSE FEES	35,000	Interest Income		PUBLIC WORKS	
Intergovernmental		INTEREST ON DEPOSITS	25,000	ROAD DEPARTMENT	937,450
ENOTAH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT REIMB	3,500	Miscellaneous Revenue		LMIG MATCHING FUNDS	108,280
RURAL SCHOOL GRANT	30,000	MISCELLANEOUS SALES	1,000	TRANSFER STATION	1,053,975
FIREWISE	5,000	INSURANCE REIMBURSEMENT	5,000	BACKHOE FOR TRANSFER STATION	100,000
GRANT-EMA	18,700	FIRE SERVICE INS REIMBURSEMENT	7,500	RECYCLING	34,725
SECTION 1 PAYMENT - FOREST SERVICE	135,000	AIRFLIGHT INSURANCE REVENUE	10,000	HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES	
FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMIN SECT 5311	55,000	L/P-CHATUGE RESORTS	35,000	REGIONAL EXPENSES	363,800
PAYMENTS IN LIEU OF TAXES- TVA	13,500	GA MTN FAIR LEASE REIMBURSEMENT	60,000	TRANSIT	130,150
FIREWORKS GRANT GA DEPT OF		FIRE DEPT DONATIONS	1,000	EXTENSIVE SERVICE (COUNTY AGENT)	22,000
EMS TRAUMA EQUIPMENT GRANT	3,500	Other Revenue Sources		RECREATION AND CULTURE	
REIMB ENOTAH CIRCUIT	50,000	OPOID LAW SUIT SETTLEMENT	25,000	REGIONAL EXPENSES	368,000
REIMB LUMPKIN CO VICT ASST POSITION	40,000	ACCG SAFETY GRANT	4,500	RECREATION DEPARTMENT	379,250
REIMB TC BOE RESOURCE OFFICER	89,000	TRANSFER FROM HOTEL/MOTEL FUND	75,000	CHATUGE CAMPGROUND	181,795
DEPT OF AG WATERSHED/DAMS GRANT	1,300	TRANSFER FROM BVR HOTEL/MOTEL	10,000	HOUSING & DEVELOPMENT	
OTHER PUBLIC SAFETY GRANT		TOTAL GENERAL FUND REVENUES	13,015,275	REGIONAL EXPENSES	54,000
LATCF	181,875	USE OF FUND BALANCE	932,785	BUILDING INSPECTION	133,350
REIMBURSEMENT CITY OF HIAWASSEE	12,000			PLANNING COMMISSION	34,950
				CAPITAL EXPENDITURES	
				EMERGENCY CAPITAL OUTLAY	120,000
				TRANSFERS OUT TO OTHER FUNDS	720,000
					13,948,060

TOWNS COUNTY SPECIAL REVENUE AND CAPITAL FUNDS 2023 TENTATIVE BUDGET JAN 1, 2023 THRU DEC 31, 2023

HOTEL/MOTEL		JAIL FUND	
BEGINNING BALANCE PRIVATE	400,000	BEGINNING BALANCE	19000
BEGINNING BALANCE BVR	15,000	REVENUES:	
REVENUES:		FINES AND FORFEITURES	15,000
PRIVATE	650,000	TOTAL BEGINNING BALANCE AND REVENUES	34,000
BRASSTOWN VALLEY(STATE FACILITY)	110,000	EXPENDITURES:	
TOTAL BEGINNING BALANCE AND REVENUES	1,175,000	JAIL HOUSE MAINTENANCE	25,000
EXPENDITURES:		ENDING BALANCE	9,000
ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS BVR 10%	11,000	VICTIM'S ASSISTANCE FUND	
ADVERTISING BVR	95,000	BEGINNING BALANCE	0
TOURISM WORKER	23,000	REVENUES:	
OFFICE EXP	3,000	FINES AND FORFEITURES	11,000
VISITOR'S CENTER	34,000	BEGINNING BALANCE AND REVENUES	11,000
CONTRACT WITH CVB BOARD	325,000	EXPENDITURES:	
TRANSFER TO OTHER FUNDS	75,000	S.A.F.E.	3667
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	566,000	C.A.S.A.	3667
ENDING BALANCE PRIVATE	590,000	DISTRICT ATTORNEY	3666
ENDING BALANCE BVR	19,000	TOTAL EXPENDITURES	11000
		ENDING BALANCE	
E 911		D.A.T.E. FUND	
Beginning Balance	50,000	BEGINNING BALANCE	37,000
REVENUES		REVENUES:	
PREPAID WIRELESS FEES	50,000	FINES AND FORFEITURES	25,000
NONPREPAID WIRELESS FEES	225,000	TOTAL BEGINNING BALANCE AND REVENUES	62,000
TRANSFER FROM GENERAL FUND	525,000	EXPENDITURES:	
TOTAL BEGINNING BALANCE AND REVENUES	850,000	CHAMPS	12,000
EXPENDITURES		OTHER	35,000
215-3800-51-1000 SALARIES	430,000.00	TOTAL EXPENDITURES	47,000
215-3800-51-2100 HEALTH INSURANCE - CO	70,000.00	ENDING BALANCE	15,000
215-3800-51-2200 PAYROLL TAXES (FICA)	32,000.00	LOCAL MAINTANANCE IMPROVEMENT GRANT FOR ROADS	
215-3800-51-2210 MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR	40,000.00	BEGINNING BALANCE	78,270
215-3800-51-2400 RETIREMENTS	10,000.00	REVENUES	
215-3800-51-2600 UNEMPLOYMENT EXPENSE	300	LMIG DOT GRANT	310,900
215-3800-52-1130 RADIO EXPENSE	20,000.00	TRANSFER FROM GENERAL FUND	108,000
215-3800-52-2200 BUILDING MAINTENANCE	7,500.00	TOTAL BEGINNING BALANCE AND REVENUES	497,170
215-3800-52-3200 TELEPHONES	60,000.00	EXPENDITURES	
215-3800-52-3500 TRAVEL	1,500.00	LMIG PROJECTS	497,170
215-3800-52-3700 TRAINING	5,000.00	ENDING BALANCE	0
215-3800-52-3900 MISCELLANEOUS	2500	SPLOST BUDGET	
215-3800-53-1100 SUPPLIES	6,500.00	BEGINNING BALANCE	4,567,500
215-3800-53-1110 OFFICE EXPENSE	15,000.00	REVENUES:	
215-3800-53-1200 UTILITIES	13,000.00	GA DEPT OF REVENUE DISBURSEMENT	2,750,000
215-3800-58-1000 CAPITAL EXPENDITURES	0.00	TOTAL BEGINNING BALANCE & REVENUES	7,317,500
215-3800-58-1000 CAPITAL LEASE PAYMENTS	76,000.00	EXPENDITURES:	
215-3800-58-2000 LEASE INTEREST	12,000.00	TOWNS COUNTY SPLOST PROJECTS	6,000,000
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	801,300.00	CITY OF HIAWASSEE/YOUNG HARRIS	495,000
ENDING BALANCE	48,700	ENDING BALANCE	822,500

Modern Woodman donates to Towns County Fire Rescue



Towns County Fire Rescue receiving a donation from Modern Woodmen Financial Representative Richard Griffin. Pictured left to right: Lt. Justin Ledford, Richard Griffin, Fire Chief Harold Copeland, Firefighter Josh Milam, and Captain Tyler Keyes. Many thanks for this \$2,500 donation.

Also Chief Copeland wants to thank the many, many folks that donate to our 501(c)(3) through our Fire Corps. And the yearly donations from Hiwassee United Methodist (Church Men's group), Chatuge Gun Club, and this year Old Brasstown Baptist Church for their sizable donations to your fire department. And the numerous contributors year in and year out.

Your Fire Department Responding to you and yours. T(Dec28,A4)JH

Towns County Fire Fighters receive awards in banquet



Towns County Fire Fighters of the Year Tom Klimoski, Rick Stamper and Doug Mills awarded by the Sons of the American Revolution. Chief's Award to Randy New, Wayne Nelson, and Walker Ross (not pictured). Rookie of the Year to Dominick Barbanera. Officers of the Year to Captain Tyler Keyes, Captain Wayne Canterbury, Captain Harold Koppel. Two Lieutenant promotions: Jonathan Wilson and Trey Moore. Most calls to Scott Kerlin. And a host of yearly service pins.

Many thanks to the Hiwassee Baptist Association for hosting the event at McConnell Baptist Church. T(Dec28,A5)JH

Winter Weather ...from Page 1A

Emergency Load Curtailment Plan, which requires temporary interruption of general firm load."

"This step is necessary due to an unforeseen generation supply challenge impacting the entire service area that is compromising TVA's ability to deliver firm load electricity to all consumers," the EMC said, calling on households and businesses to voluntarily reduce power usage.

In addition to Blue Ridge Mountain EMC customers, more than 10 million Americans receive power through TVA, which transmits electricity through a network of 153 local power providers in the Tennessee Valley region across 80,000 square miles in seven states.

On Dec. 23, the extreme demand required to offset the sudden subfreezing temps for homes and businesses across the region resulted in TVA supplying "more energy than at any other time in its history - 740 gigawatt-hours, or 740 million kilowatt-hours," the federally-owned corporation said.

Unfortunately, this meant that Blue Ridge Mountain EMC had to comply with the emergency intermittent power interruptions, which were occurring on top of the multiple weather-related outages from high winds knocking down poles and trees.

Blackouts affected about 10% of EMC members on a rolling 15-minute interval while Step 50 remained active, with the interruptions being contained to Friday and Saturday.

Around noon on Christmas Eve, the EMC announced that TVA had been able to restore full grid stability, thereby

canceling the need for continued Step 50 activation so that families could spend Christmas Day without planned power outages.

"Thank you all so much for your patience, endurance and, above all else, cooperation in this extraordinary circumstance," Blue Ridge Mountain EMC General Manager Allan Glidewell said. "We have all seen extreme temperatures in our lives, but the extent of area these temperatures are impacting is certainly unusual."

"The impacts on the Eastern U.S. power grid have been extensive. Many of the major providers have had to initiate rolling intermittent outages to save the system from a collapse such as was seen last winter in Texas."

"TVA has been affected by the extreme load, loss of some generation (some of which was due to the rapidity of the temperature drop) and the loss of power available from neighboring utilities."

Aside from the rolling blackouts and some wind damage, no major weather-related issues were reported in Union County by press time, though it

should be noted that the extreme cold does make first responder jobs more difficult.

In Towns County, firefighters handled a house fire caused by a wall heater and responded to several water alarms for frozen pipes as well as a propane leak, and no one was injured in any of the reported incidents.

The North Georgia Mountains received a dusting of snow overnight Saturday for about 0.2 inches of powdery precipitation, and high winds at times produced subzero windchills during the coldest times of the weekend, with max gusts reaching 25.7 mph on Friday.

Black ice on roadways was limited in scope, no doubt assisted by surface treatments before the front moved in last week, and it was cold enough over the weekend for sections of both Lake Nottely and Lake Chatuge to experience surface freezing and "steam fog."

By press time, the National Weather Service forecast for the week was calling for sub-freezing lows until Wednesday, with highs reaching the 50s by the end of the week.

Enotah DA Langley ...from Page 1A

"I have hired two temporary lawyers that I only have temporary (federal) funding for," he said, noting that this funding is for catch-up from the COVID backlog. "And this week, one of my regular permanent attorneys came to me and said, 'It's just not enough money - I'm quitting.'"

"So, I've added two, lost one, and now I have 12 working in our office. And that's a challenge for us. I'll tell you, right now is a stressful time in prosecution. It is hard to find good people. Just like McDonald's can't find staff, I can't find qualified staff either for what we pay."

Elaborating on the caseload in the circuit, which spans Union, Towns, White and Lumpkin counties, Langley said each of his assistant district attorneys is actively working on over 300 cases, and the number has only grown since losing one of his staff members.

"That doesn't mean they work 300 cases a year," Langley said. "That means on their active list, they have 300, and in the course of a year, more flow in and more flow out, so they really are working on 450 cases in a year."

"That's a challenge ... and it's putting them under tremendous pressure, and that's why I lost a young attorney this week; I'm asking of her things she just doesn't feel like she can do."

That being said, Langley described his current working situation as both "the best of times and the worst of times," because, while he is certainly facing staffing and caseload hardships, he also feels blessed to have "a great staff."

Turning to his guiding philosophy as a prosecutor, Langley said, "What I strive to do every day with my staff is to get substantial justice."

"We're not going to get 'perfect justice' on every case, and in some ways, not in any case," he said. "In this life, we're not going to get perfect justice - that's for the next life. But we strive to get as close to the right thing being done with every case that we can."

The district attorney

touched on several other topics that morning, including his concerns about how the "national woke agenda is affecting law enforcement and criminal justice," specifically calling out ideas around "mass incarceration" and "systemic racism" in the legal system.

"We're not sending low-level offenders into the state prison system; that's just a myth," Langley said. "All this 'woke' stuff about mass incarceration - I've never mass incarcerated anyone in my 25-year prosecution career. Every individual gets an individual case and an individual trial, and they each get their own attorney."

"We have to present the evidence. If they choose a jury trial, we have to get 12 out of 12 citizens of the county where they committed a crime to agree that it had been proven beyond a reasonable doubt."

Addressing alleged racial disparities in policing, Langley said that "the studies I've seen, (among) individuals shot and killed by law enforcement, African Americans are 26% of that; African Americans are 26% of all arrests. Where's the disparity? It's just not there."

He also criticized the idea that the state should work to reduce the prison population based on an arbitrary number of people imprisoned.

"We have 50,000 people in the state prison right now," Langley said. "That's a lot. But they drop that number like, somehow, that's the problem. I hear prosecutors say that, judges say that, law enforcement officials, governors, saying, 'We've got to reduce that number.'"

"But we don't decide how many people are in prison by the number's size - we do it by how many people have committed crimes that deserve to be in prison. It's like saying, 'Oh my goodness, we have too many speeding tickets in North Georgia.' Well, how many are speeding?"

"Here's what Georgia has done with criminal justice reform, they've said, 'Oh my goodness, we have too many speeding tickets, so let's take radar away from law enforcement... oh my goodness,

speeding dropped, how about that?' That's the thinking behind this woke agenda."

Langley fielded multiple questions, reviewing things like drug and mental health courts, office budgetary breakdown, jury duty, opioids, the process of notifying crime victims about case updates, and rough stats on the different kinds of cases his office has been handling this year.

"We have more than 300 DUI cases this year, and we have probably 700 drug cases," Langley said. "Right now, we've got technically 15 murder cases pending in the circuit. That kind of overstates it, though, because four of those (got convictions and) are on active appeal."

"(Several more are) drug overdose cases where we've charged murder based upon who we believed distributed the drugs ... then about four are more traditional murder cases."

Interestingly, Langley said that the number of "serious crimes" per 1,000 people in Union and Towns counties is remarkably low compared with other Georgia counties.

In Dougherty County in South Georgia, for example, the crime rate is 51 serious crimes per 1,000 people each year, compared with 36 in DeKalb County, 7.5 in Union and 5.6 Towns.

"You're much safer here than you are almost anywhere else in Georgia," Langley said, noting specifically that Towns County had the least amount of known gang activity in the state.

Continuing, "Ninety-eight percent of our crime here in North Georgia is among people in the drug community or among people with violence going on within their family. If no one in your family wants to kill you and you're not out doing drugs, you're incredibly safe here."

The Movers & Shakers typically meet every Friday at 8 a.m., usually welcoming a guest speaker of community import, though they are currently breaking for the holidays and will return Jan. 20 at the Sundance Grill with guest Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw.

Food Pantry Food Distribution

The Food Pantry hours are Monday - Thursday 9 AM- 12 PM with the exception of distribution day. The Distribution is every other Wednesday 11 AM - 2 PM.

Any questions or concerns, please contact Richard Thomas at towns.pantry@ndocsbg.org or (706) 896-4783. T(Dec28,A1)JH

Berry College Dean's List

Elexia Ochoa of Hiwassee GA, was named to the Fall 2022 Dean's List at Berry College. The Dean's List honors students who posted an academic average of 3.5 or better on a 4.0 scale while carrying a class load of at least 12 hours during the semester. T(Dec28,A3)JH

TOWNS COUNTY , GEORGIA SPECIAL OPTION SALES TAX 2020 SERIES SCHEDULE OF PROJECTS WITH SPECIAL SALES TAX PROCEEDS BUDGET AND ACTUAL- PROJECT TO DATE From Inception to December 28, 2022					
PROJECT	BUDGET	PRIOR YR PROJECT TO DATE	12/22/21 thru 12/28/2022	TOTAL	PERCENT COMPLETE
Capital Projects					
Roads & Bridges	600,000.00	247,125.00		247,125.00	41.19%
Fire	500,000.00	30,000.00		30,000.00	6.00%
Courthouse remodel & addition	8,000,000.00	243,726.71	108,158.62	351,885.33	4.40%
Parks & Recreation	140,000.00	0.00	28,264.33	28,264.33	20.19%
	9,240,000.00			657,274.66	
Intergovernmental:					
City of Hiwassee Allocation	1,080,000.00	245,345.45	305,505.78	550,851.23	51.00%
City of Young Harris Allocation	1,080,000.00	245,345.45	305,505.78	550,851.23	51.00%
Total					
Debt Service Bond Issuance	600,000.00	15,000.00	0.00	15,000.00	2.50%
Total	12,000,000.00	1,026,542.61	747,434.51	1,773,977.12	14.78%

Mountain Country Christmas will return to GMF in 2023

By Brittany Holbrooks
 Towns County Herald
 Staff Writer

Boughs of holly and mistletoe continued to deck the halls around the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds in the run-up to Dec. 25, as the annual Mountain Country Christmas in Lights remained open Dec. 15-23.

Folks stopped by in the final week to get one last walk-through of the lights – at least until Christmastime 2023 – that were so dazzlingly bright as to be visible from the road.

All in all, it's been a good season, according to Fairgrounds General Manager Hil-

da Thomason, who mentioned seeing "lots of smiles out there" throughout the course of 2022's Mountain Country Christmas.

"They've enjoyed it very much; we've had lots of nice compliments about the event from the lights to the vendors to the animal farm petting zoo, the fire pits where they have the hot dogs and marshmallows – all of that's been a big hit for everybody," said Thomason, estimating that about 20,000 paying and non-paying guests visited the attraction this season.

And many vendors were in agreement, though quite a few merchants had already packed up to return home for the holidays by the end of last

week, especially given concerns over the winter weather forecast.

"A lot of the (weather) had a factor in (other vendors leaving), which I can understand because most of the vendors that were here are from out of state, and they're not used to this," Christina Brown of Creative Inspiration observed. "Like the lady next to us, she's going to Florida (and) wanted to get out before the ice hit, I guess."

But as of Thursday, Dec. 22, the sky was clear aside from the occasional drizzle, and that worked out just fine for the critters at the Cowtown USA petting zoo.

Aside from draft oxen Otis and Earl, a collection including four-horned Jacob sheep, Nubian goats, a llama, miniature ponies, and even Henry the camel stayed under tented pens.

Sadie Cali, one of the animals' caretakers, was selling cups of animal food to curious kiddos and keeping an eye on the clock to prepare for the milking demonstration. Although not strictly a vendor and more of an experience, Cowtown has enjoyed a popular season.

"The weather's been great," Cali marveled. "It was a rainy season, but every time we were ready to open, the rain would shut down. We barely lost any days to weather, so

(we've been) really blessed this year."

Retired Towns County Elementary teacher Coleen Swanson found some joy in handing out smiles to children in the form of plush animals that kids – or their families – could stuff or put "voice boxes" in.

"I've seen a lot of happy children and happy adults," Swanson said, looking back on three years of being a vendor at the event. "I would call this light show a very, very successful one."

Jamie Anderson helped with his family's Downtown A to Z booth this year but has plenty of experience visiting the Fairgrounds' ever-growing display of lights, and in fact suggests "if you ain't been here to see (the lights), you need to come and see them."

Right across from the Andersons was Santa's Workshop, where Mr. Claus himself had come inside to sit in front of the fireplace rather than brave the cold on the stage outside.

"I have been blessed to hold an 8-day-old baby, and I have been blessed to have a 90-something-year-old lady sit on my knee," he remarked, glad to see such a wide variety of folks



Cousins Tristan Conard and Lake Holder had a great time last week at the Mountain Country Christmas in Lights!

Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

in his line of work. And as a Christian Santa, he was happy to minister to them.

"Keep Christ in Christmas, because that's the Greatest Gift we've ever received," St. Nick said.

Visitors Harold Cox and Amanda Rak of Hiawassee were enjoying themselves, too, with Cox appreciating the "good hot chocolate" and Rak looking to see the lights that had dazzled her on the way in.

The pair had already decided on returning in 2023, albeit earlier in the season, which starts Thanksgiving night each year.

"I'm sure it'd be a lot more fun to have time and go slow and stuff. We're just trying to see everything real quick," said Rak.

"I'm happy they do this every year," Cox added. "It's nice to get out of the house and look at the lights, especially in a small town."



Locals Harold Cox and Amanda Rak are already looking forward to the Christmas lights returning to the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds next year.

Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

Happy Chanukah...from Page 1A

Ordiales then signed a proclamation and presented it to Rabbi Markovits, and Rabbi Yonatan Hamburger spoke next.

"It's very dangerous when you hand a microphone to a rabbi," Hamburger joked. "Just warning you ahead of time, but I should have you ready in about two to three hours, so make yourselves comfortable."

He gave some context on what Chanukah is historically, saying, "About 2,200 years ago, we were surrounded by the Greek Empire, and the culture itself was so seductive that when they came to Israel, a lot of Jewish people left their Judaism."

"But there was a band of Jews who refused to do so, and they rose up and defeated this mighty enemy," Hamburger said before going on to talk about the shared humanity apparent in the Festival of Lights.

"No matter what religion you believe, we all share a common purpose to get in touch with the light that we have inside ourselves and to share it with others," he said. "Our job is to touch every person that we meet with positivity, encouragement and belief that the future is going to be greater than the present."

Also that evening, Chabad of Rural Georgia Founder and Director Rabbi Markovits related more on the happenings of his organization.

"We are a part of the largest Jewish organization in the world with over 5,500 centers across the globe," he said. "That's more than 11,000 adult representatives, so this is massive, but what we are doing here is for all of you."

Markovits added, "It's



Rabbi Chaim Markovits and wife Chayala organized the first ever local giant menorah lighting Dec. 19 via Chabad of Rural Georgia.

Photo by Jeremy Foster

been wonderful meeting everyone so far. We are here to support you and give you everything you need in your journey of Judaism. And if I have not met you yet, please come and say hello, because I want to meet you, and let's keep this going."

The lighting portion of the event then commenced.

"As we light the menorah," Markovits said, "there is a meditation that we must have to carry in our hearts, because nothing in Judaism is just an action; everything has an ethic, meaning, and values to it, because this is a holiday for families, warmth and joy."

"Every one of us is a temple, and today we are commemorating the loss of The Temple in Jerusalem, and we rebuild that temple inside ourselves."

Chabad Volunteer Bonny Herman lit the Shamash, or

lead candle, and Volunteer Ron Smith lit the first and second candles to signify the first two days of Chanukah that evening, which runs Dec. 18 through the evening of Dec. 26.

Besides donuts, refreshments, and everyone taking home a box of candles, there was another fun activity wherein spectators guessed how many dreidels were in a large container, with the closest guesser winning a \$50 Amazon gift card.

For more information or to get involved, visit www.chabadruralgeorgia.com or call 404-596-8145.

Interested parties should be aware that Rabbi Hamburger will be offering a series of adult education classes titled "Strength and Struggle Lessons In Our Character From Stories of Our Prophets" starting Tuesday, Jan. 17, at Young Harris College.

Sons of Confederate Veterans and United Daughters of the Confederacy Third Annual Christmas Ball



The Cherokee Camp, #893, Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV), Murphy, NC, hosted the Third Annual Christmas Ball at the Ridges Resort, Hiawassee, GA, this month, with the David W. Payne Camp #1633, SCV, Blairsville, GA, and the Smith's Legion Chapter, #2699, United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC), Blairsville, GA, participating. BBQ was served, with dancing 19th century dances such as the Virginia Real. SCV and UDC members are from Towns, Union, and Counties, GA, and Cherokee and Clay Counties, NC.