

Shortage of foster housing in Enotah Judicial Circuit



Juvenile Judge Jeremy Clough

By Mason Mitcham
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

On Friday, Feb. 19, Juvenile Court Judge Jeremy Clough spoke at the Mountain Movers and Shakers weekly meeting. Clough serves the Enotah Judicial Circuit, which encompasses Towns, Union, White, and Lumpkin counties.

Clough is a Juvenile Court Judge, meaning that for the most part he hears cases regarding child dependency.

“Those are cases where the child has to be removed from the parents’ home because the parents have left that child in an unsafe condition, often due to drug use, failure to provide safe clean stable housing, or things like that. When those

children are removed from the home, obviously they have to go somewhere,” he said.

Clough came with some sobering statistics regarding the state of foster housing and foster children on the Enotah Circuit.

“One of the things that I became aware of right before I took office is the fact that we don’t have enough foster homes. Right now we have 74 children who are in care in the judicial circuit. We have Towns, White, Lumpkin, and Union counties. The good news only eight of those are in Towns County. But to handle these 74 children, we have 16 foster homes. Granted, some of those homes do have multiple beds and can care for more than one child. But the short version is, we do not have enough homes,” he said.

If there are no homes within the circuit available, the children have to be moved even farther away.

“If they can’t go into a home in this circuit, they have to go out of this circuit. There are 18 counties other than the Enotah Judicial circuit in which we have children placed. Those counties range from Muskogee County to Bibb County, to Harris County, Clayton, and Rockdale,” he said.

“To kind of get a handle on what it means, there’s two different things. There’s the personal cost to the child. There’s a child who has grown up in Towns and Union

County who has to be removed from their home. Not only do they lose their parents, they lose their friends, they lose their neighbors, they lose their church, they lose their school, they lose everything,” he said.

There are too many kids in need and too few homes. The kids being moved to Columbus or Harris County are not only being thrust into a completely new environment, but they will sometimes lose contact with their parents completely. In short, the Enotah Circuit is in need of foster housing.

Clough said that despite the best intentions of the courts and agencies like DFACS, taking a child from their home is never the best option.

“The goal when children are removed from the home, every case starts out as reunification, which means the family needs to have a chance to do what they need to do to fix their problems, their employment, drug problems, housing, or whatever, so they can be reunited with their children. But when you take the family and their child is placed in, say, Columbus, oftentimes these families don’t have a lot of financial resources, how do we expect them to routinely travel back and forth to Columbus to maintain that parental bond for the child’s good?” he said.

The fact is, more foster housing is needed within the circuit.

Wastewater...from Page 1

those bulbs, so we’ve been beg-borrow-stealing for some time to get those bulbs. So this was kind of being phased out by nature of the bulbs couldn’t be replaced. So we knew this was coming. The new unit automatically cleans itself and this one does not, so you would have to remove each tube and clean it and put it back in,” said Stancil.

“This one cost about \$38,000. Installed it was about \$60,000. It had to be a quick time frame, so they had to have a lot of people here working on it,” said Baker.

Another option was a chemical disinfectant system

rather than an ultraviolet disinfectant system, but the City wished to avoid having to use chemicals such as chlorine, not only because of the inherent risks involved with having chemicals in the water, but also because over time the cost of maintaining a chemical system would be more expensive.

The City is also working on upgrading its nutrient reduction system, which is separate from the disinfectant system. When upgraded, the system will help reduce the buildup of algae in Lake Chatuge.

“The nutrient reduction building will house pumps and chemicals and basically will pump into the nutrient reduction tank. What will happen is it will mix, the chemicals will bond in here, and more solids will fall out, more nitrogen and phosphorus will fall out, so that’s the way we reduce it, and what’s pumped out as sludge,” said Stancil.

The sludge is then dried and transported to a landfill in Habersham County, leaving Towns County and its water cleaner and safer than before.

Park...from Page 1

“Our objective is to achieve maximum efficiency in the operation and use of transit vehicles throughout their life cycle of five years or 100,000 miles,” read Deputy Clerk Andrea Anderson.

The Vehicle Maintenance Policies and Procedures ensure use of maintenance of equipment is in compliance with FDA requirements, ensures that maintenance personnel and operators are familiar with the procedures, ensures maintenance of equipment is sustained at the highest level practical in a state of good repair, enables a positive response to all transportation needs.

Next, the County presented, for public review, a zero-tolerance drug and alcohol testing policy specifically aimed at transit drivers.

“Failure of any employee to report within five

days of a criminal drug statute conviction for a violation shall result in termination. If they do it and they get caught, they’re out and there’s no appeal. You know we don’t want people on drugs out here driving,” said Commissioner Kendall.

Third, the County gave a second reading of the ordinance preserving the Bell Mountain Summit by establishing the property as a County park and historical site open to the public.

“Last month we had a reading of the Bell Mountain Ordinance, and it’s law that you’ve got to do it twice. This is just something we’re having to do to make it official,” said Kendall.

“Be it ordained that the 18-acre summit of Bell Mountain shall hereafter be Bell Mountain County Park and Historical Site, with an observation deck designated as the Hal Herrin Scenic Overlook from whence citizens and future generations can drink

in the beauty of God’s creation of Lake Chatuge glistening in the sunlight far below, and where every important Appalachian Mountain peak in Georgia, North Carolina, and even Tennessee can be seen,” Anderson read.

Finally, Commissioner Kendall announced that the County was providing a new online service. Surveyors, attorneys, and realtors will be interested to know that online property maps of Towns County are being updated.

“We’re doing an upgrade to the County’s website. Also, we’re going to have a PowerPoint about when we did another flyover of the County for mapping purposes. I’m sure the realtors will be researching this on the County website. So if anyone wants to pull any parts of the property up of the County and see the boundary or anything about it they can do that. This will be a service provided by the County at no cost,” he said.

City...from Page 1

businesses that are doing business as something else. So there’s some of that crossover. I think net we’re probably going to come up with between 75 or 80 businesses that have not got their business licenses. I wanted to make sure I sent an invitation to everybody. I didn’t want to leave anybody out,” she said.

The City Business Group will focus on issues that are similar to issues faced by the Ambassadors.

“I think we can beautify the place and make it much better looking and much more attractive so that people don’t just drive through here, they want to stop and shop and do something. Right now it’s like we’ve got an empty store here and an empty store there, there’s all these empty stores. Whereas if they see a really nice downtown area, they see events going on downtown, on that area around the square,” said Ordiales.

The group’s first

meeting is on Mar. 8 at the Towns County Civic Center and Ordiales has high hopes for its future.

“I’d like to discuss overall business things. What do we want to look like? Who do we want to be? What do we want out downtown area to be defined as? What are our issues?”

What kind of problems do you see in getting us to that point?” she said.

“So more than anything, just to get input from everybody on what they say is needed here in our town. Any ideas that they might have for revitalization or for cleaning up or beautification. Anything like that that they might be able to come up with in order to get this part going. And that’s another thing is defining what we see as Downtown Hiawassee. What is it? It all has to be defined,” she said.

Ordiales expects to act as the city representative, but not the chair of the group. She

said that the position of chair should be held by a business owner.

Further, Ordiales hopes that the group can find some unity with the Hiawassee Ambassadors and the Chamber of Commerce Ambassadors, because they are all working toward the same goal.

“I think if we collectively had a group together to say this is our focus and this is what we want to do first and this is what we want the city to help us with, then we could progress faster. The Chamber of Commerce has a group of ambassadors. They are business owners, so they would be prime target to come up and handle this initiative. Then there’s also the Hiawassee Ambassadors program for the City. In my opinion we should find some commonality for that. We don’t need to over-committee. Why do we need a committee for this and a committee for that? Let’s just have one big committee. We’re all trying to do the same thing,” she said.

Chicago Blues Legend Mac Arnold serves up a Plate Full O’ Blues at the Peacock Performing Art Center

This old school blues band played to a full house at the Peacock Performing Arts Center in Hayesville, NC last year and was gracious enough to accept our offer to play for us again on March 12th at 7 p.m. His music will make you move, feel and see why he was given an Honorary Doctoral Degree in Music from the University of South Carolina.

Mac Arnold started his career at an early age and it reads like a “Who’s Who” of Blues and R&B legends. His high school band included James Brown on piano. At the age of 24 he joined the Muddy Waters Band and help shape the electric blues sound that inspired the rock and roll movement in the late 60s. He then formed the “Soul Invaders” which backed up artists like the Temptations and B.B. King. Mac spent 5 years on the set of Soul Train and worked with Bill Withers (“Lean on Me”) before moving back to his native South Carolina.

Mac now serves up a mess of Blues with his own



Mac Arnold & Plate Full O’ Blues

band “Mac Arnold & Plate Full O’ Blues”. The band has Austin Brashier on guitar and vocals, Max Hightower on keyboards, harmonica, guitar, bass and vocals, Tez Sherard on drums and vocals and, of course, Mac Arnold on vocals, bass and his legendary Gas Can Guitars.

The show begins at 7 p.m. Saturday, March 12th. Tickets

are \$25 for adults, \$12 for students 12 and up, get your tickets early because they’ll go fast!

Tickets are available online at www.peacockperformingarts.center click on the blue “Buy Tickets” button. You may also stop by our theater between 10 a.m. - 2 p.m., Mon - Fri at 301 Church Street, Hayesville, NC or by calling the box office at 828-389-2787.

Amateur Radio Club meeting

Attention HAMS and anyone interested in Amateur Radio - the North Georgia Tri-State A.R.C. (Amateur Radio Club) meetings are held on the first Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m. at Branan Lodge on Wesley Mountain Road in Blairsville. All of our meetings are open to the public. Our next meeting will be held on March 1st. For more information about joining the Club or becoming a HAM, contact Alan Zimmerman (AJ4YH) 706-781-3160.

Army Veteran Robert Lester receives Quilt of Valor at recent presentation



U.S. Army Korean War Veteran Robert Lester was presented a Quilt of Valor on February 13, 2016 at the Historic Union County Courthouse. Bonny Garrett and Anna Stone help drape quilt.

to get your horses back up to date on vaccines and redo their Coggins!

This year’s clinic is on Saturday, March 19, from 9 a.m. to noon, rain or shine under our wonderful covered arena. Dr. Zager from Ocoee Animal Hospital will be coming out to do Coggins tests for \$27 each, including a tape weighing of your horse.

All other vaccinations are available at good prices, and there will be no additional

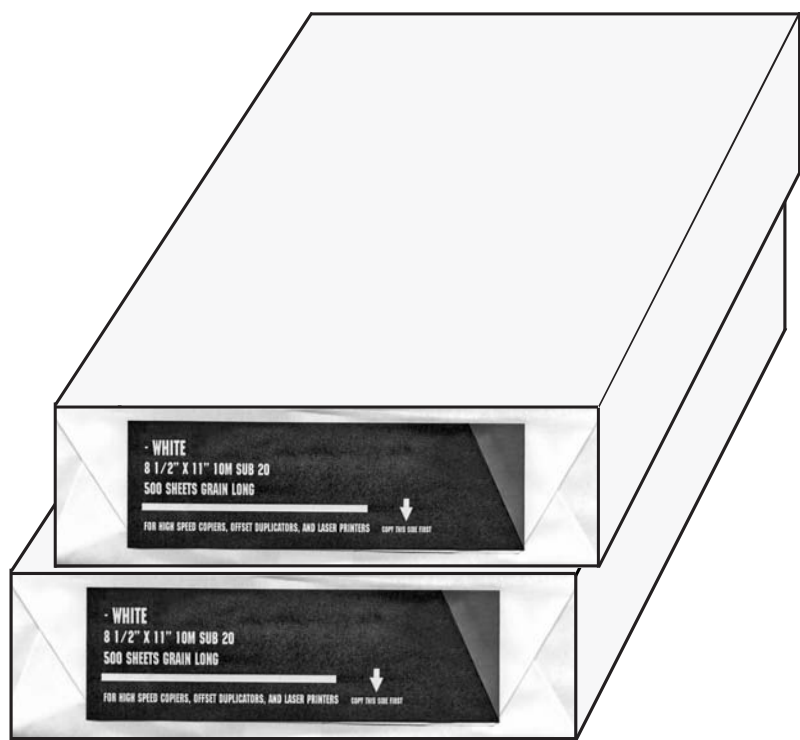
charges such as check-up fees or farm call fees. Vaccine prices are as follows: Rabies (\$22), ETW (\$16), ETW/West Nile (\$37), Rhino/Flu (\$26), and Strangles (\$37).

If time permits, other exams and treatments may also be requested. As you arrive at the arena, sign in to receive a number. Horses will be seen on a first-come first-serve basis. The clinic is open to everyone. If you have questions about the clinic, contact Art Miller at 706-435-8298



It’s been a year since the last Coggins/vaccination clinic at the Union County Saddle Club, which means it’s time

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