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Clinton questions timing of qualifications challenge

By Charles Duncan
Towns County Herald
Editor

Towns County Sheriff Chris Clinton addresses the Towns County Board of Elections on Friday concerning a complaint filed against him. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

Towns County Sheriff Chris Clinton has been accused of falsifying information on his candidate qualifying affidavit by the woman who hopes to unseat him come November.

Linda Curtis, who will seek the post of Towns County sheriff as an independent candidate, has accused Clinton of providing false information on his qualifications affidavit.

For his part, Sheriff Clinton called into question the legitimacy of Curtis' complaint, citing Georgia law that stated an elector has two weeks from the date of the end of qualifying, March 11, to question a candidate's qualifications.

A meeting of the five-member Towns County Board of Elections and Registration on Friday uncovered no answers to the now ongoing debate. The Board had legal counsel present.

One thing is for certain, the Elections Board can dismiss Curtis' complaint, while at the same time, deciding to bring a complaint of its own. The Board can question a candidate's qualifications all the way up until the election.

The board opened the meeting, allowed Sheriff Clinton to raise questions about the challenge, and then went into closed session. The point of the meeting was to decide whether to hold a hearing

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Wilkinson faces challenge; four seek to fill Rep. Allison's shoes

By Charles Duncan
Towns County Herald
Editor

Sen. John Wilkinson

Roy Benifield

District 50 State Sen. John Wilkinson has experienced a swift leadership rise since his election to the Georgia State Senate in a 2011 special election.

Sen. Wilkinson, a Toccoa Republican, now serves as the chairman of the Agricultural and Consumer Affairs Committee in the Georgia State Senate.

He has brought almost $2 million to Towns County in the form of library construction funding.

Sen. Wilkinson, historically unchallenged for reelection, faces fellow Republican Roy Benifield, who hails out of Martin. Benifield's campaign literature claims that he wants to represent the counties within District 50. He supports no tax increases, a three-term limit for state legislators, and defending the rule of law.

In Georgia House District 8, no longer can constituents depend on the steady leadership of State Rep. Stephen Allison.

The Blairsville Republican, the long-time representative of Union, Towns, Rabun and White counties, opted not to seek reelection. Rather, Rep. Allison has opted to spend more time with family and his law practice.

Seeking to fill Rep. Allison's shoes are four candidates – three Rabun County candidates, Kent Woerner, Matt Gurtler, and Joshua Littrell. The fourth candidate is David Barton from Union County.

Woerner figures to be focused on improving the educational experiences of

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2016 Prom a night to remember in Towns

By Lily Avery
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

LeAnn Dean and Adam Taylor share a dance for royalty at the TCHS 2016 Prom. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

The Towns County Recreation and Conference Center buzzed with excitement as students laughed, danced and made some of the best memories of their high school careers on Saturday, April 30.

The occasion? The Towns County High School 2016 Junior-Senior Prom.

As students entered the venue, they walked through a pair of photo booths.

One of the booths featured a backdrop reminiscent of a Hollywood premier, decked out with props that varied from mustaches to top hats, for students to come and share their goofy sides. The other photo booth consisted of a more classic backdrop, with minimal props so students could experience a traditional pre-prom photo.

Together, presented with not one but two opportunities to document the evening with dates and friends alike, prom-goers got the best of both worlds.

Entering the dance hall, a cityscape of lights lined the walls, creating a perfect setting for the night's theme, #OnTopoftheWorld.

Green and blue strobe lights skipped across the floor as students danced the night away to music that was as eclectic as their dresses and tuxedos. Students sang along to "Sweet Home Alabama," got down to "Apple Bottom Jeans," and joined together to dance the "Cha-Cha Slide."

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Feds, state and locals raid Hayesville Family Practice

By Charles Duncan
Towns County Herald
Editor

Keith Plott

Hayesville, NC - A nurse practitioner with a Union General Hospital-owned clinic in Clay County, NC has surrendered his DEA registration number to federal agents with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, the North Georgia News and Towns County Herald have learned.

Nurse Practitioner Keith Plott, a former educator in Union and Towns counties, basically surrendered his authority to write medical prescriptions after authorities from two states and the federal DEA Diversion Task Force searched the facility last week, the newspapers have learned.

Investigators with Georgia and North Carolina along with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration Diversion Task Force searched Hayesville Family Practice in Clay County, NC on Wednesday, April 20, the newspapers have learned.

The investigation, part of a joint venture between law enforcement agencies in Georgia and North Carolina probing prescription drug fraud involving former Union General Hospital CEO Mike Gowder, Blairsville physicians James Heaton and David Gowder, led investigators to Hayesville Family Practice, which is owned and operated by Union General Hospital in Union County.

On April 20th, agents with the North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation, the U.S. DEA Drug Diversion Task Force, along with investigators and deputies from Union County, in Georgia, as well as Clay and Cherokee County North Carolina Sheriff's Office, executed a search warrant at Hayesville Family Practice.

Plott was named in the search warrant and he was interviewed at the facility as the search warrant was executed, according to sources close to the investigation.

Agents informed the newspapers that a search warrant affidavit executed

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Towns rabies clinics set for Saturday

By Lily Avery
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Timothy Jennings and Melissa Mattee are bringing 4-H'ers to the front lines of the rabies clinics this weekend. Photo/Lily Avery

Hiawassee Animal Hospital and Lake Chatuge Animal Hospital will be joining forces this Saturday, May 7, to offer multiple rabies clinics countywide.

The clinics will be held in three locations: at the Hiawassee Animal Hospital, Towns County Comprehensive School and Lake Chatuge Animal Hospital.

From 10 a.m. until 12 p.m., residents can bring their pets to the Hiawassee Animal Hospital to see Dr. Kirk Vardeman, or they can head over to the schools to see Dr. Dick Smiley.

Drs. Vardeman and Smiley will be continuing vaccinations at the same locations from 1 p.m. until 3 p.m.

Dr. Hilty Burr of Lake Chatuge Animal Hospital will be vaccinating animals at his place of business between 9 a.m. and 12 p.m.

Along with the rabies vaccination, which will cost $10, doctors will be offering canine distemper/parvo shots, as well as the feline distemper vaccination, both of which will cost $14.

Dogs under the age of 12 weeks will only be eligible for parvo/distemper.

Local 4-H students and members of the Towns-Union Master Gardener Association have been enlisted to help with the clinic this year.

"It's great for the kids to get out in the community," said UGA County Extension Agent Melissa Mattee. "We wanted to make sure we have a good presence there."

According to Mattee, there will be four to six Master Gardeners present to assist with the clinic, and eight to 10 4-H'ers.

The students will be at the school directing traffic, helping out with bookkeeping and being extra sets of hands when needed.

"We expect this to be a big thing," said Mattee on turnout.

County Extension Coordinator Timothy Jennings said that in the past there have been up to 500 people come out for the vaccination.

However, Jennings mentioned that due to other clinics now being offered throughout the year, the turnout for this specific clinic is expected to be around 250.

Regardless, both Jennings and Mattee said they are looking forward to this year's clinic, and they encourage those with unvaccinated pets to drop by for a quick and easy vaccination.

Tritt, eggs and cornhole headed to Fairgrounds

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Georgia native Travis Tritt is on his way to the Anderson Music Hall, and his show promises to be nothing short of pure entertainment.

"Travis Tritt will be May 14 at 7 p.m.," said Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds General Manager Hilda Thomason. "We've sold almost 1,600 tickets already. The tickets are $46 and $36, plus a $2 handling fee. Modern Vinyl is going to open for Travis Tritt, and they're from Blairsville."

Known for his hit Country performances such as "Where Corn Don't Grow" and "Here's a Quarter (Call Someone Who

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Schools busy with less than one month left

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Bob Gibby and Stan Chastain share a laugh on April 19th.

All three of the Towns County Schools have been extremely busy coming up on the end of the year, which was made abundantly clear in the April meeting of the Towns County Board of Education.

The schools are in various stages of Milestones testing through to nearly the last week of school, with the elementary having gone first. TCES Principle Dr. Sandy Page reported that testing had been, at that time, going smoothly, though coordination was a large effort involving everyone, staff and faculty, at the schools.

Dr. Page had more good news to report.

"I just have to brag on our Science Olympiad kids," said Dr. Page. "We went March 21 to Oconee High School. There were 24 schools represented, these were city schools. We had White County, Union County and us, and we placed sixth overall. The Top 5 went to state.

"But we were so tickled by that because we'd only started practicing for the Science Olympiad in January. Union and White, this is the

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