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Clinton remains on Republican Primary ballot | Sheriff Clinton's legal counsel

By Charles Duncan Towns County Herald Editor

Towns County Sheriff Chris Clinton will remain on the 2016 Republican Primary Ballot, the Towns County Board of Elections voted 4-0-1 last Monday.

Board member Barbara Shook abstained from the vote.

However, the Board voted to advise Enotah Circuit District Attorney Jeff Langley that information of a 1987 conviction of misdemeanor theft by receiving stolen property in Union County was part of Sheriff Clinton's past.

Langley said last week that he had not received the paperwork from the Towns County Board of Elections, so, he couldn't make comment at this time.

The reason to give that information to District Attorney Langley is to determine if Sheriff Clinton has committed felony false statements, said



Towns County Board of Elections Co-Chair Mark Dehler, left, explains that any criminal questions must be answered by the district attorney, regarding allegations of false swearing by Sheriff Clinton. Photo/ Shawn Jarrard

Board Co-Chair Mark Dehler.

Sheriff Clinton's qualifications, namely that he had not been convicted of a crime of moral turpitude, were brought into question recently by Independent candidate for Towns County sheriff, Linda Curtis.

Curtis alleged that Sheriff Clinton filed a false affidavit when he qualified for sheriff. She proved that Sheriff Clinton was convicted in 1987 in Union County for misdemeanor theft by receiving stolen property. She spent 19 hours researching convictions

in the Union County Clerk of Courts Office, she said.

"Did we lose here to-day?" she asked. "No, we won here today because the people of Towns County will now know that their elected Sheriff has a previously undisclosed criminal record."

According to Union County Superior Court records, Christopher Michael Clinton was arrested by Union County Sheriff's Office Chief Deputy Ronnie Duncan in September 1987 for buying a 9mm Smith & Wesson handgun from Mark Lenwood Droze, knowing that the gun had been stolen from Alexander's Store, in Union County.

The arrest took place in the former Hardee's parking lot in Blairsville, now the location of Burger King, court records show.

The Elections Board left Sheriff Clinton on the ballot based on an exemption al-See Clinton, Page 6A

By Charles Duncan Towns County Herald Editor

In a statement from Sheriff Chris Clinton's legal counsel, Stewart, Melvin, and Frost, a Gainesville-based law firm, the claim that Sheriff Clinton is not qualified to hold the office of sheriff because as a teenager 30 years ago he pled guilty and was convicted of a misdemeanor theft by taking/ receiving stolen property offense, does not amount to a valid challenge to his current candidacy.

"It is simply a meanspirited political effort to discredit a man who has served Towns County honorably and with integrity for the last 8 years and more," according to the statement.

"In 2007 when he first sought the office of sheriff and qualified as a candidate, the fingerprint criminal record check supervised by the Probate Judge disclosed the conviction, and the judge did not consider such misdemeanor to be a "crime involving moral turpitude" that would disqualify Clinton from holding the office of sheriff.

"Sheriff Clinton has NEVER denied the conviction. He has never had another conviction - felony or misdemeanor -- in the ensuing thirty years.

"That his political opponents attempt to label theft by receiving stolen property an offense involving moral turpitude – more than eight



Chris Clinton

years after Sheriff Clinton first qualified for office and 30 years after his guilty plea - begs the question.

"The FACTS are that in 2007 Clinton was vetted by the Probate Court and others, and was found qualified under Georgia law to serve as sheriff. In the two subsequent election cycles, Clinton signed the requisite Affidavit for Sheriff swearing that he was qualified under Georgia law as the incumbent sheriff to hold the office for another term. By signing the Affidavit for Sheriff each time he ran, Clinton did not swear he had never been convicted of a felony or other offense involving moral turpitude; what he swore to was that he was qualified to hold the public office he sought: Sheriff of Towns County.

"His qualifications were determined back in 2007 and nothing since 2007 has dis-qualified him to serve."

Aaron hammers message home at YHC

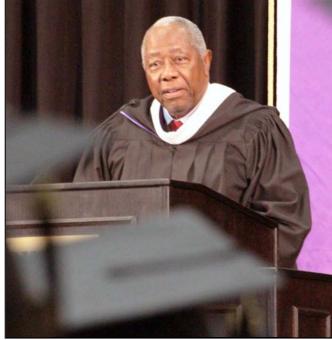
By Shawn Jarrard **Towns County Herald** Staff Writer

One hundred and eighty-nine students received a final lesson before graduating on Saturday, May 7.

The lesson came not from one of their many professors, but from Henry "Hammerin' Hank" Aaron, who delivered the Commencement Address for the 2016 Young Harris College Commencement.

YHC President Cathy Cox gave Aaron a gracious introduction, citing his many accomplishments in life and in baseball, including a playby-play of his 715th home run that broke the all-time career home run record previously held by Babe Ruth.

"It has been said that Hank Aaron has been a model of humility, dignity and quiet



address at Young Harris College on Saturday. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

have witnessed that humility and grace firsthand here at Young Harris through his work as a member of our Board of Trustees from 2000 to 2008, and I've seen it through his generous philanthropy and his service on several state boards, such as the Georgia Ports Authority, where he served with my sister. "Many of you know

confidence," said Cox. "We

that he has a longstanding friendship with Gov. Zell Miller. And Zell Miller said that he truly knew what being a celebrity was when he walked through the Baseball Hall of Fame with Henry, and he saw tourists realize that this legend was walking among them.

"When our college de-

By Lily Avery Towns County Herald Staff Writer

Close to 700 residents from Towns and Clay counties gathered at the Towns County Recreation and Conference Center to celebrate the 65th Annual National Day of Prayer on Thursday, May 5. The theme for this year's celebration, "Wake Up America," found embodiment in Pastor Mike Blackaby's keynote address. Mike was one of many representing the Blackaby Family that Thursday.

cided to construct a baseball Braves' Hall of Famer Hank Aaron delivered the commencement See Aaron, Page 6A

National Day of Prayer bigger than ever

releases statement to media

"It can be easy to lose hope, and if a Christian loses hope, what hope is there for the world," said Blackaby, youth pastor of First Baptist Church in Jonesboro, citing scripture. "No matter how bad things get, it's never over until Jesus declares the last word."

Pastors, evangelists. and even one Towns County High School senior, Shea Underwood, led the more than two-hour ceremony, speaking words of encouragement and offering praise to their creator. Each individual speaker shared a special prayer for one



Shea Underwood shared words of encouragement with classmates and his community at the National Day of Prayer at the Towns County Recreation and Conference Center. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

of the 13 sectors mentioned in going to be in prayer for our the program.

"It's all about prayer," said Emily Phillips, who helped to organize the event. "We're

government, our military, our veterans, our churches, our

See Prayer, Page 6A

Towns Rabies (Clinic offers annual protection

By Shawn Jarrard Towns County Herald Staff Writer

Dr. Kirk Vardeman has been giving rabies shots as part of clinics concerned with the public health of humans and animals for the past 30 years, and the Towns County 4-H Program has worked right alongside him to make those clinics a reality.

This year, the Union County 4-H program stepped in to help Hiawassee Animal Hospital with its administrative tasks while Drs. Vardeman and Dick Smiley administered vaccines to pet cats and dogs throughout the morning and afternoon on Saturday, May 7.

Chatuge

Nottely

Dr. Hilty Burr put his work to the public service as well, vaccinating animals at Lake Chatuge Animal Hospital, and taken together, with Dr. Vardeman holding down the fort at Hiawassee Animal Hospital and Dr. Smiley trying a new drive-thru approach at Towns County High School, the vets vaccinated hundreds of animals against rabies.

One indication that rabies may be on the rise within the county is the infection of a domesticated cat that occurred last November.

That infection resulted in the death of the animal and a bitten worker at Hiawassee Animal Hospital, further re-See Rabies, Page 6A





Cecil Dye named Superior

Clerk of the Year by peers

Towns County Clerk of Courts Cecil Dye is all smiles after having been named District Clerk of the Year.

By Shawn Jarrard Towns County Herald Staff Writer

Each year a Superior Court Clerk is selected by the other Clerks of Superior Court in the state to be honored as the Clerk of the Year for their service, contributions to other clerks, the citizens of the state of Georgia, and the citizens of their county.

Towns County Superior Court Clerk Cecil Dye received this award at the annual Clerks Conference for the second time in his career on April 27, 2016. He was honored with this award the first time on March 23, 1999.

"It is an honor to receive this award, but the best honor is to be elected by the citizens of Towns County, allowing me the honor to serve them," said Dye.

Dye has been voted into the office of Superior Court Clerk every election since 1984.

"Towns County is 160 years old, and I've been blessed enough to serve for 32 years of it, one-fifth of the history of Towns County," said Dye.

Dye is part of a vast network of other clerks in the state - he knows them all. Clerks get together each year at the annual conference, but they remain connected yearround via email and other communications.

"We stay in constant contact, daily, with each other," said Dye. "When anybody's got a problem we try to help each other. We've got a prayer line where, if somebody is sick or their family's sick, they start praying for us. It's really a close-knit organization."

Stetson Bennett of Wayne County conceived of the Clerk of the Year award in 1984, the same year Dye first took office, and Bennett was the first to win the prestigious title in 1985. Bennett is recognized as being the longest serving Clerk of Superior Court in Georgia history with 64 years in office.

Early voting continues

By Shawn Jarrard **Towns County Herald** Staff Writer

As early voting continues this week and into next, it is important that residents remember Saturday, May 14. This Saturday is the

only weekend date to vote

early, giving residents who work during the week the perfect opportunity to get out and vote ahead of the upcoming General Primary Election on Tuesday, May 24.

Voting on Saturday, May 14, will take place be-

See Early, Page 6A

2016 Antique **Appraisal** Fair

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