

Towns County Sports

Towns County's Leader In Sports

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Photos from Towns County's third place finish at Union Invitational on Saturday



Towns County basketball photos by Todd Forrest

Red Cross continues to install free smoke alarms in eligible households

By Mason Mitcham
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

On Wednesday, Nov. 18, the Northeast Georgia Red Cross visited Towns County to install another round of smoke detectors.

The Red Cross previously visited in June of this year, and Director Matthew Akins hopes to continue doing so.

"The Red cross is doing this as a five-year program to reduce the deaths and injuries by 25 percent across the United States," he said.

Preparation is key. A fire detector can give prior warning that someone who is elderly or disabled might not get otherwise.

"We're targeting the elderly and low-income. Sometimes this is a luxury item — they're on a fixed income, they can't afford their medicine, so how can they afford a smoke alarm?" said Akins.

In addition to installing smoke detectors, the Red Cross seeks to educate people on fire safety and facilitate participation between the Red Cross and organizations such as the Towns County Fire Department.

Assisting the Red Cross were several Hiawassee vol-



Red Cross volunteer with smoke alarms

unteers who split into teams to cover the entire city. Among them was Sally Varao, a veteran Red Cross volunteer.

"Some of our members have been here from the conception of the team, have been here for 15 years. But we have new members that joined us last year. So we're looking at trying to get new members. I've been a volunteer at the Red Cross for 14 years here in Hiawassee. I was a volunteer in California where they had earthquakes and then came back here and did it," Varao said.

Initially, the Red Cross volunteers intended to install

smoke alarms in 60 households. However, not everybody who qualified for a free smoke detector installation was home at the time, so the volunteers couldn't install their entire supply.

"The requirement is that someone has to be home to let us in, to authorize us installing them in their house, and this is a wonderful program because we are putting in 10-year lithium batteries free of charge. They're very expensive smoke alarms. And also handicap smoke alarms for the hearing impaired," said Varao.

"The Red Cross program of smoke alarm installation has to do with reducing the injury and deaths due to fires by 25 percent across the country, and your best way of making sure you're safe and your family is safe is to have a smoke alarm in your house. Because what a lot of people don't realize is the average time of being able to get out of a house once it's on fire is two minutes. That varies, obviously, but the average time is two minutes, so we want to make sure that people know that and respond to it," she said.

At final count, the Red Cross installed 96 smoke alarms in 49 households.

NASCAR 2015

By Gerald Hodges/the Racing Reporter

"Rowdy" Kyle Busch Wins It All

HOMESTEAD, Fla.—Not only did Kyle Busch win the 2015 NASCAR Sprint Cup Championship, but he also won the last race of the season.

Busch's season ended much better than it started. He broke his right leg and left foot in an Xfinity Series race prior to the Daytona 500 and missed 11 races. To make the Chase, NASCAR rules required that he finish 30th or better during the regular 26-race season.

He finished 28th and had one victory, which made him Chase eligible.

Busch's hard work showed during Sunday's race. He had led 41 laps, but was running third behind Brad Keselowski and Kyle Larson on lap 253 of the 267-lap race, when a caution for debris came out.

He and the other leaders pitted for four fresh tires. On the restart, Busch quickly took over the lead from Keselowski. Kevin Harvick attempted to close on Busch, but with only eight laps remaining in the race, all Harvick could do was watch as Busch's No. 18 Toyota pulled away from him.

"What a great day," said Busch. "This is the dream of a lifetime. With all the things we went through being here is unbelievable. I've got to thank my wife and team for all the help and not allowing me to give up."

The championship was his first Sprint Cup title and the fourth for car owner Joe Gibbs. On Friday night, Busch's truck team driven by Erik Jones claimed the series championship, giving Busch an owner's title.

Kevin Harvick would have won his second Sprint Cup championship if he could have passed Busch, but he finished second, 1.86-seconds back.

"We had a lot of trouble getting off the corners," said Harvick. "The longer the runs, the more problems we had. Today, it didn't go our way."

Brad Keselowski finished third, while Joey Logano and Kyle Larson rounded out the top-five.

"Oh man, what a day," said Chase contender Jeff Gordon, who finished sixth. "We had a decent car, but the handling wasn't what we had hoped for. I was loose for most of the race."

"But it's still a great day. I've had a great career, and while this wasn't my best race, it's been a wonderful experience, and I think all my fans."

Matt Kenseth, Kurt Busch, Jimmie Johnson, and Denny Hamlin were the remaining top-10 finishers.

The fourth Chase contender, Martin Truex Jr. finished 11th.

"We did our best, but obviously we are disappointed," said Truex. "The car just didn't handle the way we needed it to. Making the Chase was a great experience and we'll build on it."

Top-20 final points leaders: 1. Kyle Busch, 2. Harvick, 3. Gordon, 4. Truex, 5. Edwards, 6. Logano, 7. Keselowski, 8. Kurt Busch, 9. Hamlin, 10. Johnson, 11. Newman, 12. Earnhardt, 13. McMurray, 14. Menard, 15. Kenseth, 16. Bowyer, 17. Almirola, 18. Kahne, 19. Larson, 20. Biffle.

Buescher And Roush Win Xfinity Title

Chris Buescher's 11th-place finish in the season-ending Xfinity race was good enough to earn him his first series title.

Kyle Larson, who led 160 laps, was the race winner, followed by Austin Dillon, Erik Jones, Brian



Kyle Busch



Chris Buescher

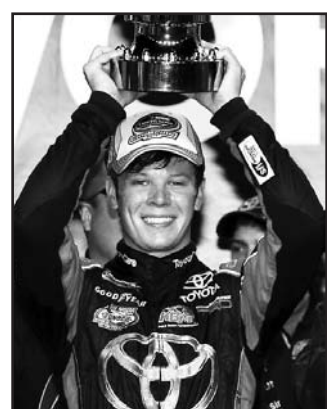
Scott, Ryan Blaney, Daniel Suarez, Ty Dillon, Chase Elliott, Regan Smith, and Darrell Wallace Jr.

Buescher's title run came in only his second season in the Xfinity Series. The championship marked the fifth time a Roush Fenway Racing driver has won an Xfinity Series championship and the third time in the past five seasons.

"This is the biggest moment in my career," said Buescher. "It's just an awesome year for our organization, for our team. The guys did a tremendous job — no DNFs all year, no mechanical failures, nothing that we beat ourselves on. We were flawless in that regard and it put us in the position to go out and win this thing like we did today. We didn't have to go out and win the race in order to bring the championship home. We had to make sure we finished and did just that. I'm so happy we were able to pull it off and, again, so proud of my team. They really stepped up to the occasion and made sure this happened."

The No. 22 car, owned by Penske Racing won the Owners Championship.

Daniel Suarez was the Xfinity Series Rookie of the Year.



Erik Jones

Hayley, and John Wes Townley.

"Well, after Gateway back here in the summer months, we finished 23rd, and I think we were down 20-something points to Crafton, third in points, and at that point I don't think I had the right mentality to go win a championship," said Jones. "I think at that point we were just focused on winning races."

"I kind of switched my mentality to the point of take the wins when we can get them, but we need to take these seconds, thirds, fourths and fifths when we can get them, as well, and not try to force anything. The last eight races or even a little bit before that we had a streak of top-10s here all the way to the end. I don't know the exact number it ended up at, but just finished in the top-10, being consistent, being competitive and running up front and contending for wins, that's all we needed to do throughout the rest of the year, and that's what we did."

Jones became the youngest driver in Camping World Truck Series history to win a championship at just 19 years, 5 months and 21 days.

The owner of Jones' No. 4 Toyota is Kyle Busch. It is the first Owner Championship he has won.

Final top-10 points leaders: 1. E. Jones-2, Reddick-884, 3. Crafton-877, 4. Sauter-809, 5. Peters-804, 6. Hayley-866, 7. Hamric-733, 8. Townley-730, 9. Kennedy-690, 10. Gallagher-677.

Racing Trivia Question: Where is Martin Truex Jr.'s hometown?

Last Week's Question: Who will Chase Elliott be driving for in 2016? Answer: He will replace Jeff Gordon at Hendrick Motorsports.

You may contact the Racing Reporter by e-mail at: hodges@race500.com.

Footloose...from Page 1



way," said Stowers.

Stowers took over the position of director from her friend Chris Adams, the former director, who left at the end of last school year to helm a new dramatic arts program at Union County High School.

"He had a very well-established program, and so the way that he did things and how he did things was really the only thing that these kids have ever known. When he knew he was going to be leaving, he talked to me about taking over," said Stowers.

Although she's taught band and chorus classes, Stowers has most recently been working in Towns County Family Connection. Coming back to teaching presents its own set of challenges.

"It's almost like my first year of teaching again, because I've been out of the classroom for eight years, so it's just a big change. It's taken me a while to get used to all that's involved in that, just the planning. I've

been in so many plays but I've never been the director for a play before. I helped Chris out with two plays but I've never done the whole aspect of a show before," she said.

Although she is still adjusting to the students' expectations and vice versa, Stowers is looking at an excellent future for the drama program.

"We're a pretty small school. There are 300 kids in the middle school and I have 320 in the high school. So we have good numbers in our program right now. There are 60 kids in the high school program and I have 75 kids in the middle school program. Those are really good numbers," she said.

Her plan is to give the youngest students the grounding in theater-specific skills they need to go on to succeed at the high school level. Those include not only acting, but the technical aspect of production.

"I'm really putting a lot of energy and focus on my middle school aged kids because I want them to be used to how I rehearse," she said.

She plans on doing teaching units covering soundboard, lighting, set design, and costume design, among other skills, such as dance and choreography.

"So they all kind of have some experience with that so they can figure out what they like best about theater. And so when they get to high school, they can be more specialized and really have the ability to delve in and get deep and do the light boards and design the light show," she explained.

Stowers hopes that working with kids at a young age and continuing to work with them through their senior years at high school will help to ensure that Towns County Schools will continue to have strong theater and chorus programs in the future.

VFW...from Page 10A

are for sale.

"If someone had to go and buy a tree like that, it'd be three times as much as it is here. So it's just another way of raising money for the veterans and the community. That's why the girls decorate them, and we try to sell them decorated," said Walker.

The building used to be owned by the county. Walker was grateful to Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall

"We average about \$6,000 or \$7,000 per month. It's good. It goes right back," said Walker.

for supporting the VFW.

"Bill Kendall, the commissioner, he is very much behind all this. They paved the drive here for us a couple of months ago. This was all a county building years ago and it's been in county hands, but we pay the electric bill on it, and other than that it's all donated by the county," he said.

Last month, the thrift store made \$10,000.

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