



Towns County Herald

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Local Weather and Lake Levels

Thurs: T-Storms 67 60
 Fri: T-Storms 71 63
 Sat: Cloudy 70 61
 Sun: Rain 67 55
 Mon: T-Storms 61 49
 Tue: Rain 59 46
 Wed: Rain 59 44



Upstream Elevation Predicted 12/23/2015
 Lake Chatuge 1,917.31
 Lake Nottely 1,759.84
 Blue Ridge 1,667.86

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Towns County High School Basketball to Host: Hokes Bluff

Union County

Piedmont Bulldogs

Polk County Wildcats

Lumpkin County Indians

White County Warriors

Hayesville, NC

In the Battle of the States Tournament

DECEMBER 28TH-30TH



Hiawassee Police Chief Jimmy Wright laid to rest

From Staff Reports
Towns County Herald
eduncan.tch@windstream.net

Hiawassee Police Chief Jimmy Wright would have been in awe of the send off he received last week.

After all, he had the best seat in the house as hundreds packed McConnell Baptist Church to pay their last respects to Chief Wright, who died Dec. 13 of natural causes.

The 50-year-old Wright was a 25-year law enforcement veteran in Towns County and Hiawassee.

The law enforcement presence for the funeral was astounding as agencies from across Northeast Georgia attended services for Chief Wright.

Jimmy Paul Wright grew up in Towns County and dedicated his adult life to law enforcement. He began his career as



Pallbearers for Hiawassee Police Chief Jimmy Wright escort his casket to the hearse that would carry him to his final resting place. Wright, 50, died Dec. 13 of natural causes. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

Working to fill a need

for the community's underprivileged children, Chief Wright started the Shop With a Cop program, which provides Christmas for what Chief

Wright called the 'tweeners,' or children ages 12-17, who seemingly had fallen between the cracks. The program continues

to be a huge success today as underprivileged children gathered with law enforcement volunteers on Friday, Dec. 18 at Walmart in Blairsville.

It was the only Shop With a Cop event that Chief Wright had ever missed.

This year's Shop With a Cop was dedicated to Chief Wright by Hiawassee Mayor Barbara Mathis, and the event carried on with not one, but two Wrights - Brittany and Jared, his daughter and son - holding the torch in their father's absence.

"It was definitely a great passion of his, and we just wanted to be here ourselves today in his memory," Brittany said.

For Jared, this was actually his third Shop With a Cop. Jared is currently stationed at Pearl Harbor with the U.S. Navy, but before joining the

See Jimmy, Page 10

Fire Station 2 readies for new home off Georgia 66

By Mason Mitcham
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Towns County is purchasing property for a new fire station.

At the December county meeting, the Towns County Fire Corps Board met with property owner Eddie Corn to discuss purchasing his property to move the fire station in the Station 2 district.

"We have found a parcel of property that really meets our needs, and we want to thank Eddie Corn and Commissioner (Bill) Kendall and Chief (Harold) Copeland for working to-



Towns County Fire Chief Harold Copeland discusses the coverage area of the proposed new Fire Station 2 at last week's county meeting. Photo/Mason Mitcham

gether to put this thing together for us so that we have an opportunity to ultimately have a new and permanent Fire Station 2 in the Young Harris area," said See Station 2, Page 10

Towns Historical Society gathers for Christmas cheer

By Mason Mitcham
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

On Monday, Dec. 14, the Towns County Historical Society gathered for an evening of Christmas songs - but there was something unique about these tunes.

Although each song was as familiar as Christmas itself, each was played on instruments up to nearly 200 years old.

"There's something even in the most Grinch-like among us that loves a Christmas song," announced musician Jerry Taylor, member of the Reed Organ Society and entertainer for the evening.

He began the evening



Jerry Taylor played music on one of his antique Reed Organs at the annual Historical Society Christmas gathering.

playing an 1847 lap organ, commonly known as a rocking melodeon.

"Believe it or not there

See Historical, Page 10

Shop With a Cop legacy continues

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Blairsville - For years, Shop With a Cop has been an annual passion of Hiawassee Police Chief Jimmy Wright, and less than a week after his passing, the children of Towns County he so loved to make smile continued the tradition in his memory on Friday, Dec. 18.

This year's Shop With a Cop was dedicated to Chief Wright by Hiawassee Mayor Barbara Mathis, and the event carried on with not one, but two Wrights - Brittany and Jared, his daughter and son - holding the torch in their father's absence.

"It was definitely a great passion of his, and we just wanted to be here ourselves today in his memory," Brittany said.

For Jared, this was actually his third Shop With a Cop. Jared is currently stationed at Pearl Harbor with the U.S. Navy, but before joining the service, he went twice with his



Family and friends of Hiawassee Police Chief Jimmy Wright carry on his annual Shop With a Cop legacy. Volunteers gathered to help Jimmy's daughter Brittany and his son Jared carry on the annual tradition last week at Blairsville's Walmart. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

dad to take kids shopping.

"This is the most special one for us," Jared said. "This is his legacy. His passion was taking care of the city, the county that he loved so much, and all the kids in it. So being here to honor that legacy is something truly special for us."

Chief Wright always said that Shop With a Cop was one of best things he'd had a part in while in law enforcement, and that's a long time, as the chief

celebrated his 25th year in law enforcement this year.

"Jimmy's been a friend of mine all my life, and I know this was his passion, to help kids," said Lt. Daren Osborn with the Union County Sheriff's Office.

Lt. Osborn hails from Hiawassee, and he used to be Hiawassee Police Chief back in the day.

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BOE rewards its teachers for longevity

By Mason Mitcham
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

On Monday, Dec. 14, the Towns County Board of Education voted on an issue near and dear to many teachers' hearts: the number of allowable personal days.

"The personal leave policy that we currently have, it goes by what the state recommendation is, which means that regardless, every teacher has three personal days that they can take. We've ran into a few issues in the past couple of years where a teacher who's been here a long time has a lot of sick days built up, and so if something occurs where they need to take that fourth personal day, they have to get docked for that day, and I hate doing that, but that's our



Dr. Darren Berrong

policy and we have to do it," said Towns County Superintendent of Schools Dr. Darren Berrong.

"So the policy we're looking at changing is that any employees who have been with the system for less than 10 years will get those three personal days of leave per year.

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Adopt a Grandparent continues at Chatuge

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Roberta Ford and Kristy Wallace assembled their helper elves to conduct the Third Annual Adopt-a-Grandparent for Christmas in Union and Towns counties on Saturday, Dec. 19.

Ford and Wallace, both Independent Beauty Consultants with Mary Kay, started the program in 2013 with the Union County Nursing Home, before expanding it last year to reach Chatuge Regional Nursing Home.

This year, the two were able to add the Lazy-R Personal Care Center as beneficiaries of their give-back program, and they got help from friends and clients Erika Star and Brigitte Edghill.

As the team made its way up and down the halls of each retirement community, the residents expressed their appreciation for visitors bearing Christmas gifts.

"We wanted a way to



Kristy Wallace, Erika Star, Brigitte Edghill and Roberta Ford formed the Joy Team that made a difference at Chatuge Regional, and Union County nursing homes. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

give back to the community with our businesses and our success in our Tri-State area," said Ford. "But not just give back to the community - we wanted something that was lacking and needed TLC."

"There's a large percentage, and it's anywhere from 55 to 75 percent of the residents

in nursing homes don't have a soul visiting them. And sometimes, for some of them, we're the only visitors."

As part of their visit, the women dress up with the Christmas spirit in mind - Ford as Santa with her helper elves

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Colt Ford here Jan. 2

By Mason Mitcham
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Mark your calendars, music lovers, because on Saturday, Jan. 2, Country Music artist Colt Ford will perform at Anderson Music Hall at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds.

Opening the show will be Country Music duo Laughlin, featuring two talented artists from Athens.

Tickets are on sale now but going fast for the 7 p.m. show, at \$33 apiece.

"The last time we had Colt Ford here, we sold about 1,300 tickets," said Hilda Thomason, general manager of the Fairgrounds. "I'd say it's been probably three or four years ago, but he did a great show and it drew a younger audience."

"I assume that some of the Athens folks will come up and see him. He was in Athens a few months ago and he sold out down there. I think it will be a younger crowd, and it's an opportunity to have something going on for New Years Weekend," she said.



Colt Ford

The Fairgrounds is currently involved in an effort to draw larger, younger crowds to its venue.

"We try to get some of the younger artists a lot. It's not that we're not trying to get them, it's that they go on tour with these bigger acts like Lady Antebellum or Luke Bryan, and they get exposure by going on all these big tours. Once they get a hit, they're so much

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