

Towns County Herald

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Wednesday, December 24, 2014

Local Weather and Lake Levels

Xmas: Snow	40 30
Fri: Sunny	56 37
Sat: Clouds	57 36
Sun: Rain	48 30
Mon: Sunny	49 35
Tue: Rain	50 31
Wed: Ice	45 28



Upstream Elevation Predicted 12/24/2014	
Lake Chatuge	1,913.00
Lake Nottely	1,758.99
Blue Ridge	1,666.14

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SPORTS Page 8A

Towns' Christmas tradition continues

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Who knew that a single strand of Christmas lights would turn into one of the great Towns County Christmas traditions?

When Robert Buchanan was 4 years old, a family friend gave him that fateful strand of lights. The rest? Well, that's Towns County history.

"We've done lights every year, but it's gotten substantial over the last 15 or 20 years," said Robert, now 50, of Hiawassee.

Substantial may be an understatement, as Robert estimates more than 100,000 Christmas lights and the use of nearly 1,000 extension cords to cover the electrical needs of recreating the North Pole.

The lights have come to be known as The Buchanans' Christmas Lights, and can be found in the dark at 469 Scat-away Road in Hiawassee, just past North Mt. Zion Church of God.

Everyone in the family helps with the lights each year, including Robert's mother Della Mae, father James and aunt Lelia, though Robert does the majority of the installation.

"We try to do a little something different every year, add a little something to it every year, but it's turned into what it is," said Robert.

Even Santa Claus, with the help of the Buchanans' neighbor Mike West, gets in on the fun.

"He comes on Fridays and Saturdays when his schedule and the weather lets him."



It's Christmas until Jan 4th at the Buchanan Household. The tradition continues on Scataway in 2014. Photo/Loweel Nicholson

said Robert.

The entire display spans two homes and up behind the houses, and seemingly every square inch of the property has been taken into consideration. In fact, this true labor of love takes nearly half a year to get everything in just the right place.

"I start putting it up the third week in September and hope I have it on by Thanksgiving," said Robert. "So, it takes all of October and all of November, and a week or two in September just to get it up. I'll be lucky if I get it down the last of January, middle of February - it will take me all of January and about half of February just to take it down, depending on the weather."

Many of the decorations

are handmade by Robert, such as the snowflakes he built from PVC pipes and lights, and a 6-foot star that hangs on a tree above the property.

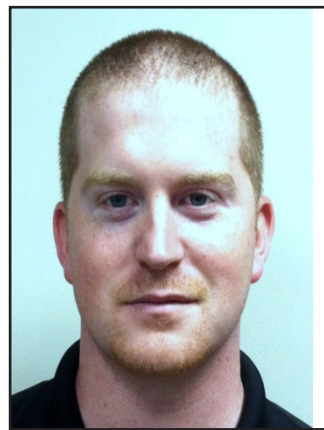
"I'm proud of it," said Robert. "It's a ton of work, but I'm proud of it. Once I get it up and it's the way I want it, with most everything working the way I want it, I enjoy it."

Their yard contains too many Christmas trees to count, several nativity scenes, snowmen and deer. There is even a bit of the exotic, as Santa can be seen flying a helicopter near colorfully lit palm trees, and a frog wearing sunglasses and a Santa hat basks in a pool of water that flows over it in a fountain.

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Deputy Deyton on the mend; named Deputy of the Year

By Charles Duncan
Towns County Herald
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Deputy Aaron Deyton

As Towns County Deputy Aaron Deyton continues to improve from the injuries sustained during a traffic stop earlier this year on Oct. 1, his family awaits word whether a third surgery is necessary.

Towns County Sheriff Chris Clinton asks that everyone continue to remember Deputy Deyton and his family in their prayers as his family and the Towns County law enforcement community await news whether a third surgery will be needed.

Deputy Deyton was assisting a Hiawassee Police officer during a traffic stop that occurred in the parking lot of Mull's Motel.

The driver of the Ford Explorer, Daniel Lee Bower, age 26 of Hayesville, North Carolina, assaulted Deputy Deyton by stabbing him in the throat after he fled into the Hardee's parking lot across the street.

Bower has been indicted on charges of criminal attempt to commit a felony (Murder), two counts aggravated assault on a peace officer, obstruction of an officer, possession of methamphetamine, driving under the influence (Controlled Substance), tag light Violation, and failure to wear a seat belt.

Deputy Deyton has un-

dergone two surgeries as a result of the assault and is presently still on medical leave. A relief fund was established for Deputy Deyton at the United Community Bank. Donations can be made to the Deputy Aaron Deyton Account at any branch of United Community Bank.

Meanwhile, Deputy Deyton's family is overwhelmed by all the support Sheriff Clinton, the deputies and staff, the EMTs, firefighters and other state and local officials have provided during the recent stabbing of Deputy Deyton, "our son, grandson and brother."

"We are extremely grateful for the quick, efficient response given to Aaron. We know there was not a major show of force at the site of the incident at 3 a.m.; but it certainly did not take Sheriff

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Chief Wright sends 46 home smiling

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Blairsville - Forty-six children from Towns County Schools got to Shop With A Cop on the last day of school before Christmas break, and they went home with smiles on their faces and gifts for under the tree.

Just as school let out on Friday, Dec. 19, the kids chosen to participate in this year's program loaded up on a school bus for a trip to the Blairsville Walmart.

Children ogled the toy section, picking up this toy or that game. Some kids bounced basketballs, while others hopped onto skateboards to see if they were the right fit.

Video games were a popular holiday item, and accessories like headphones featuring microphones for online play appeared in more than one shopping cart.

All in all, the choices among the children were varied and diverse. One girl picked out a doll from the Disney film Frozen, while another looked at fishing poles.

Clothing made the shopping lists of several students,



and everything from Nerf guns to Dremel tools went home with children.

One kid picked out a ring for his mother from the jewelry section, and another chose to get a filter for the family aquarium.

As students checked out,

they chatted and cut up in line, laughing and waiting almost patiently for their turn to make off with the Christmas loot. In a word, the children were happy.

Shop With A Cop is

See SWAC, Page 10A

Home Depot builds a fence for Connell

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Christmas came early for the Russell family of Towns County, as Home Depot donated a fence to surround their home.

Employees volunteered from five area Home Depot stores to come out to the Russell home and build the fence on Monday, Dec. 15, and Tuesday, Dec. 16.

A partnership between Home Depot and autism advocacy group Autism Speaks made the fence possible.

The Russell family is Kim and Dana Russell and their twin sons, Connell and Christian. Connell is nonverbal autistic.

On March 20, 2012, Connell wandered from the family home in the Soapstone Community of Towns County and into the Chattahoochee National Forest, sparking a manhunt of nearly 100 volunteers.

Towns County Sheriff Chris Clinton and Towns County Assistant Fire Chief Harold Copeland took charge of the search.

Sheriff Clinton brought



his insight as the uncle of an autistic child to bear, and pulled out all the stops to locate Connell before it got too dark.

The Georgia State Defense Force under Gen. Jim Butterworth stood ready to assist, and law enforcement agencies from Towns, Union, White, Rabun, Habersham and Fannin counties provided volunteers for the search.

Georgia's Department of Natural Resources, the U.S. Forest Service and Georgia State Patrol also lent a hand, and Sheriff Clinton even called in a K-9 unit.

Around 6:45 that evening, Towns County Firefighter Austin Denton and a member of the Appalachian Drug Task

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Empty Stocking Fund comes through again



By Shawn Jarrard
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Staff Writer

Thanks to the efforts of the Towns County Sheriff's Office to collect donations this year, its Empty Stocking Fund will ensure that more than 200 children in Towns County receive something in their stockings for Christmas.

"We'll probably end up helping more kids this year than we even did last year as far as the need," said Sheriff Clinton. "The community has been just incredible this year - the donations have been really good."

The largest toy donation of the season came by way of the BMW Motorcycle Club of Georgia on Sunday, Dec. 14.

"This was the largest number of BMW riders in recent years, and it looks like the largest donation of toys from the BMW Motorcycle Club since I've been sheriff," said Sheriff Clinton. "They carried in three huge boxes filled with

toys, as well as multiple 30-gallon bags and individual toys. The squad room is a magical place."

The Georgia Vision Center of Hiawassee also donated a plethora of Christmas gifts for Towns County children, along with the Bald Mountain Park Property Owners Association.

Alumni from the Citizen Law Enforcement Academy have given much of their time to help the front of the sheriff's office wrap and prepare gifts.

"I think there are going to be some very excited children," said Sheriff Clinton. "I think there are going to be some kids in the county who otherwise wouldn't have had anything, and they're going to wake up and have a really nice morning."

And in the spirit of holiday celebrations, on Thursday, December 11th, the Towns County Sheriff's Office held

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Winter Concert series brings Christmas cheer

By Shawn Jarrard
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Staff Writer

The Towns County Middle and High School bands performed their Winter Concert to the delight of parents and residents on Thursday, Dec. 11.

"It was kind of the culmination of everything we've been working on this semester," said Towns County Schools Band Director Derrick Nolen.

This year's concert, which was Nolen's first time directing a group of his own on stage, featured three musical groups: the high school percussion ensemble, the middle school band and then the high school band.

The percussion ensemble played a fun piece called Clas-

sicle.

"The middle school, they did an arrangement of Frosty the Snowman, a piece of music called The Invincible Warrior, and then an arrangement of Angels We Have Heard on High," said Nolen.

For this concert, Nolen strove for balance in the musical selections.

"Some places you'll find all Christmas music," said Nolen. "Some places you'll find it a little more balanced, and I

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TOWNS COUNTY HERALD



From the staff of the Towns County Herald