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Taylor Cornett reigns as 2019 Basketball Homecoming Queen

By Jarrett Whitener
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Towns County High School hosted its annual Homecoming basketball game on Friday, Jan. 11, and the 2019 Homecoming Queen was crowned during halftime of the boys' game.

The Homecoming Court consists of three underclassmen girls as Homecoming Princesses and five senior girls who were nominees for Homecoming Queen:

Kayla Peacock (Freshman), Abby Mauldin (Sophomore) and Rylee Kitchens (Junior); and seniors Erika Spano, Kaitlyn Crowder, Carly Woodard, Kenzlee Denton and Taylor Cornett.

As the girls moved onto the court escorted by their parents, they felt many different emotions, such as excitement mixed with a little fear and

nervousness about whether or not they had been chosen by their peers to be Queen.

With anticipation rising and the announcement ready for the title of Runner-Up went to Kenzlee Denton, who felt honored to receive the award.

"I feel so blessed that my grade chose me to be one of the five to represent our grade, and then to get Runner-Up was an honor," said Denton.

Following high school, Denton will pursue a career as an elementary school teacher, and she has not currently committed to a college because she is still unsure of where she would like to attend.

With the Runner-Up chosen, the remaining four girls patiently waited for the big announcement on who would be the 2019 Towns County High School Basketball Homecoming

Queen. And Taylor Cornett was announced as having won the title of Homecoming Queen.

"I feel good, blessed, and thankful to receive this," said Cornett. "I'm scared to graduate, but it's bittersweet, because I love it here, yet I'm ready for the next step in life."

Cornett plans to attend Brewton-Parker College in Mount Vernon, where she has received a soccer scholarship to attend the school.

While in college, she hopes to expand her studies and major in a business field in hopes of getting a job in the business world one day.

"I'm going to play soccer down there on a scholarship," said Cornett. "Then I want to do something involved with business, but I'm still undecided on what exactly I want to do."

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Towns County High School 2019 Basketball Homecoming Queen Taylor Cornett, center, with the rest of the Homecoming Court. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

County, cities team up to hire McKay for economic development

By Mark Smith
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw, Hiwassee Mayor Liz Ordiales and Young Harris Mayor Andrea Gibby have come together to hire Denise McKay, a highly experienced economic development officer, to work with all three local government entities.

"It's not about what I want or what Cliff wants – it's about what the citizens want," said Ordiales, to which Gibby added, "We're sharing, and we've never done that

before."

Bradshaw, Ordiales and Gibby all agree that it's rare when, not only two, but three government entities can come together for the betterment of the larger community. All three agree that it's a rare opportunity as well.

Ordiales said she met McKay two years ago when she was attending a Georgia Municipal Association conference and approached her then about a possible move to North Georgia.

McKay declined at the time, but a year later, she changed her mind.

"My children are grown and live in Kentucky," said McKay. "This is a good place to be. It's a nice community and I love living in the mountain range. That's what attracted me to come up here. The air is wonderful. The stars are beautiful."

Prior to coming to this area, McKay was the economic development officer for Hampton, Georgia. She has over 10 years' experience in economic development.

All three elected officials agree that they are not in

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21st Century program keeps kids active and learning after school



State Sen. John Wilkinson, center left, with the staff and students of the Towns County 21st Century Afterschool Program.

By Jarrett Whitener
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

The Towns County 21st Century Afterschool Program plans to apply for a state grant to keep the program going for the next five years.

"So, one of the things we have to do is let all of our stakeholders and community know of our intent to apply for this money from the state," said Program Director Jenny Stowers. "We are asking for \$350,000 from the grant, and that will be per year, for five

years, but it does go down a little bit over time."

This program serves students in pre-K through 12th grade and offers enrichment activities for the students to partake in after the school day concludes.

"We offer a wide variety of activities for the kids," said Stowers. "Every day, the kids get a snack, and we do some sort of recess, something physical as a break from the day."

"Then we have homework help and lots of enrichment programs that connect with the

school day, and that includes STEM classes, cooking classes, math and reading enrichment, and lots of physical activity, because we agreed to sign on to the initiative called Georgia Shape, which calls for kids to be active at least 30 minutes a day.

"So, we offer something physical for every student every day, because we want them healthy and we want them moving."

Activities for the program are tailored to fit the needs

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Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw, Economic Development Officer Denise McKay, Hiwassee Mayor Liz Ordiales and Young Harris Mayor Andrea Gibby. Photo by Mark Smith

Heaton hit with 62 new federal charges in superseding indictment

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

Blairsville-based physician Dr. James Heaton is facing 62 new charges after a federal grand jury handed up a 274-count superseding indictment on Thursday, Jan. 3, 2019.

A superseding indictment is one that replaces an original, and in this case, the original 212-count indictment handed up on April 4, 2018, has been replaced with one featuring 62 additional charges against Heaton, according to court records.

Based on the new charges, Heaton is alleged to have prescribed a number of controlled substances – methadone, hydrocodone, oxycodone, oxycodone with acetaminophen, testosterone, and alprazolam, aka Xanax – "outside the scope of professional practice and not for a legitimate medical purpose."

These additional charges are in line with previously established charges faced by Heaton and his two co-defendants in the federal prescription drug case, Dr. David Gowder and Mike Gowder.

The co-defendants participated in a Jan. 11, 2019, arraignment proceeding to hear

the charges against them in the superseding indictment, and all three men pleaded not guilty to those charges. They pleaded not guilty to the charges in the original indictment on April 9, 2018.

Next steps in the case include a telephonic pretrial conference on the superseding indictment scheduled for Jan. 30 at 10 a.m. in Courtroom 103 of the U.S. Courthouse in Gainesville.

Initially, the jury trial for the three co-defendants had been set for Feb. 11, 2019, but citing scheduling conflicts for Heaton's legal team in a Dec. 19, 2018, pretrial conference, U.S. District Judge Richard W. Story reset the trial to a specially set date of April 8, 2019.

Motions filed last year by the separate legal teams of Mike Gowder and Heaton to sever each other as co-defendants so that they may be tried separately were still outstanding at press time.

Mike Gowder's attorney has argued that severing the co-defendants would put Heaton in a better position to testify as a witness on Gowder's behalf, as Heaton has made exculpatory statements in support of Gowder.

Story said on Dec. 19 that



Dr. James Heaton

he would decide on the motions to sever defendants at a later date, and the Jan. 30 telephonic pretrial conference holds the potential for further discussion of the motions.

Each defendant is presumed innocent of the charges, according to the U.S. District Attorney's Office in Atlanta, "and it will be the government's burden to prove each defendant's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt at trial."

Prior to their Feb. 4, 2016, arrests in Union County, Mike Gowder was the CEO of Heaton General Hospital and Dr. Heaton ran a family practice clinic in Blairsville.

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Hiwassee woman facing extradition on New York state warrants

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

The Towns County Sheriff's Office assisted the Broome County (New York) Sheriff's Office in apprehending one of their fugitives from justice on Friday, Jan. 4.

Bridgette Eugenia Kelley, 36, has been wanted out of Broome County for more than three years. She was living in Hiwassee at the time of her arrest.

"The Broome County Sheriff's Office has been looking for Bridgette Kelley since Oct. 19, 2015, on a Grand Larceny in the Fourth Degree arrest warrant," according to the Broome County Sheriff's



An image posted to the Broome County (New York) Sheriff's Office Facebook page highlighting the Jan. 4 arrest of Bridgette Kelley in Hiwassee.

Office Facebook page. "Kelley was also sought on an additional seven warrants throughout New York state for larceny-related crimes.

"Kelley went on the run and was listed as one of

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January Term 2019 Towns County Grand Jury Indictments

By News Special
Towns County Herald

The following individuals, who are presumed innocent until proven guilty, were indicted during the January Term 2019 of the Towns County Grand Jury:

Corey Justin Brown, aggravated assault; cruelty to children in the first degree; terroristic threats; battery, Family Violence; two counts cruelty to children in the third degree; hindering emergency telephone call; simple battery,

Family Violence.

Robert Korley Hammock, cruelty to children in the first degree; two counts battery, Family Violence; cruelty to children in the third degree.

William Wade Scott, criminal attempt to commit a felony; criminal trespass.

Melvin Linn Masters, burglary in the first degree; theft by conversion; theft by receiving stolen property; theft by taking.

Michael Henry Beeman, driving while license suspended.

William Roland Canup, aggravated battery; aggravated assault; terroristic threats; three counts battery.

Brandon Ross Dinger, aggravated assault; aggravated assault, Family Violence; possession of methamphetamine; battery, Family Violence; obstruction of an officer.

Amanda Jo Wade, crossing the guard lines with drugs; possession of methamphetamine; possession of marijuana, more than an

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