

# Kelley...from Page 1A

Along with his professional ties, Kelley has deep roots in the mountains. His dad was local World War II Veteran Jasper Kelley, who served as an Infantry Sergeant in Germany during the war.

After the war, the Kelley family set up shop in Atlanta, only to move back to Union County in the mid-1950s, when Lewis was in the fourth grade.

He would later graduate from Union County High School and complete two years at Young Harris College before being drafted into the U.S. Navy during the Vietnam War.

When he got out of the Navy, Kelley attended Georgia College in Milledgeville and earned bachelor's and master's degrees, specializing in administration.

Kelley worked at Central State Hospital while in Milledgeville, but he returned home to Blairsville in the late '70s to help around the family farm after his dad became injured in a tractor accident.

He worked for one year as a counselor and assistant

principal at Union County Middle School before going on to start Towns Union Training Center, now called Trackrock Industries.

Next, he would go on to open Branan Lodge of Blairsville in 1980, and he transitioned again in 1990, when he went to work for Towns County Hospital and Nursing Home.

In 1999, Union General acquired the hospital and nursing home in Hiawassee, and from there, Kelley served as the administrator of the renamed Chatuge Regional Hospital and Nursing Home until about 2013. That's when he went to work at Union General as chief operating officer for a year and a half prior to heading back to Chatuge Regional.

He retired from Chatuge Regional in 2015, only to return later that year in a limited capacity, as his professionalism and experience brought him right back into the fold during a time of need at the Nursing Home.

And months later, he

became CEO of Union General Hospital, Inc. in February 2016, where he has led a tireless team of medical professionals for the past three years.

Looking back on his career, especially his years spent expanding medical care in the North Georgia Mountains and beyond, Kelley said he hopes his legacy will reflect his desire to have made a real difference in people's lives.

"If you make a difference, that's good enough," said Kelley.

Having just turned 69 this past Thanksgiving, Kelley said he's simply ready to spend more time with his family, including his wife Melissa, his four kids and five grandkids.

"It's going to be difficult for me to pull the plug completely, because I've never not worked other than that little three months that I was away," said Kelley. "But I've got a bunch of grandkids. I need to attend some ballgames, I need to take them fishing, and I need to do things that I haven't been able to do."

# City Council...from Page 1A

the water treatment plant.

"We have better, licensed employees today in the water treatment plant than we did a year ago," said Ordiales.

Random drug testing for all city employees is also standard now, she said.

City departmental bank accounts have been reduced from 30 accounts to 16 accounts, and all cross-fund loans within those accounts have been reconciled and eliminated. The remaining 16 accounts have been properly set up.

Two high interest loans were paid off, saving over \$200,000 in interest, and a third loan will soon be retired, saving the city even more interest going forward.

Several contracts were renegotiated, saving the city thousands of dollars annually: employee insurance for \$76,000 in savings, EMI at the wastewater treatment plant for \$42,000, city auditors for \$21,000, landscapers for \$5,000, Itron, Inc. meter readers for \$4,000, and Advanced Disposal for \$1,000.

Standard processes for utility payments, meter reading, alcohol and business licensing, work order processing, utility service establishment and building and sign permitting were implemented.

Run-time efficiencies at the wastewater treatment plant have been implemented, saving the city thousands of dollars in energy costs.

The city now has a Safety Officer, and over 225 training hours are required of city employees in the various departments. This alleviated all the compliance issues with the workers' compensation folks, said Ordiales.

The city has implemented ServLine Insurance against water leaks, which is a boon for the 97.4 percent of Hiawassee residents who've chosen to take advantage of it.

Processes for city purchase orders and gasoline usage were established.

Fifty-two historically non-paying tax parcels were identified and resolved.

The city was designated a PlanFirst Community and a City of Ethics for the first time ever. A PlanFirst Community, among other perks, is entitled to a 50-basis point reduction in interest rate on Georgia Environmental Finance Authority loans.

Grants that the city applied for and received were: Appalachian Regional Commission sewer grant for \$600,000, ARC strategic plan for \$30,000, Local Maintenance and Improvement Grant through the Georgia Department of Transportation for \$19,000,



The new joint county/cities Economic Development Manager Denise McKay in the Jan. 28 Hiawassee City Council Work Session. Photo by Mark Smith

Georgia Council for the Arts for \$5,000, and Georgia Municipal Association for \$3,000.

The Municode Project to put all municipal codes online was completed, police vehicles were upgraded, and a multitude of small city improvement projects was completed in 2018.

Going forward, the streamlining of meter reading will continue, water and sewer line mapping will take place, and ongoing infrastructure and equipment upgrades are planned for within budget constraints, said Ordiales.

In other Hiawassee news, Hiawassee Police Chief Paul Smith updated the council and work session attendees with 2018 statistics from his department.

Hiawassee PD made 1,142 traffic stops in 2018, issued 681 tickets, gave 362 written warnings and "hundreds" of verbal warnings. And all told, 118 arrests were made in 2018.

Smith said there were 98 fewer arrests made in 2018 than 2017, and drug arrests were down every month in 2018 compared to 2017.

Of the 335 reports filed in 2018, 205 were incident, 87 were accident, 36 were miscellaneous, five were domestic violence and two were juvenile reports.

Economic Development Manager Denise McKay reported that she has been very busy getting started in her new position researching various economic development options for Hiawassee and attending a plethora of meetings.

McKay said that the three current top priorities for Hiawassee are refacing the Post Office, landscaping in front of the Ingles gas station, and creative placemaking, i.e. wall murals. All of these are part of the recently completed

Strategic Plan.

Moving along, Ordiales said the city will accept the \$1.3 million low bid for the sewer plant project, and that the contract will be awarded to Sol Construction out of Atlanta.

Sol Construction, said Ordiales, has a good reputation and has committed to use local contractors whenever possible.

The first reading of a strengthened Hiawassee Sign Ordinance, which generally mirrors the county sign ordinance, went unopposed. It is expected that the updated sign ordinance will be approved at the Feb. 5 regular Hiawassee City Council meeting.

Ordiales introduced a resolution to adopt an ordinance allowing for two readings of a proposed ordinance in one meeting. Such an ordinance would allow the council to invoke it on a case-by-case basis, and only if the full council is present and the vote is unanimous.

The proposed ordinance is intended to expedite business that has been previously discussed and with the full knowledge of the public, which is the reasoning behind the requirement that the entire council be present. The vote would need to be unanimous each time the ordinance is invoked.

There was discussion about whether Hiawassee business owners who live in Towns County but outside the city limits could run for office in Hiawassee and vote in Hiawassee elections. Ordiales said the matter will be looked into and addressed.

It was also announced in the meeting that Hiawassee Police Detective Brandon Barrett was selected by the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 7807 as the First Responder of the Year.

# Indians...from Page 1A

Garrett Oakes finished in Third Place.

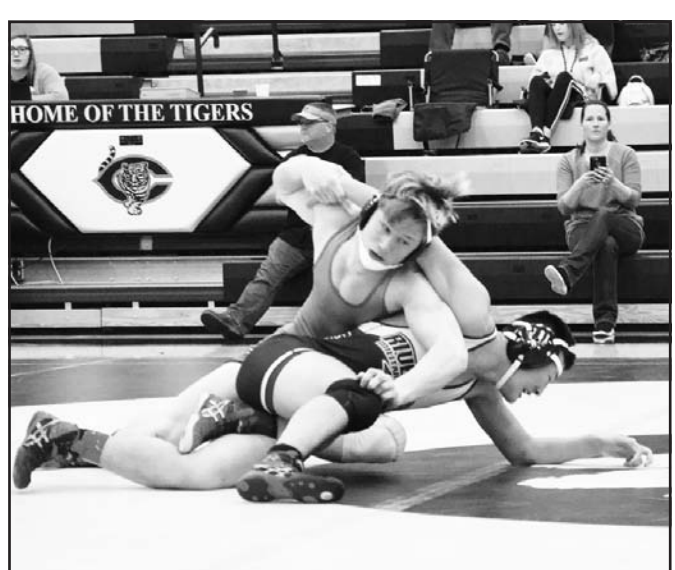
After earning State Runner-Up in the 160-pound weight class in 2018, Rogers is looking to bring a state wrestling title to Towns County for the first time in school history.

This past weekend, Rogers made it to the final match of the tournament but was unable to compete due to illness. It was his second year in a row finishing as Area Runner-Up.

"Blaine has been struggling with some health stuff the past few weeks, and yesterday, everything just came to a head," said Indian Head Coach Jeff Stowers, adding that he's hopeful Blaine will be well enough to compete at Sectionals.

He went on to say that he was happy that all of his Area wrestlers qualified for Sectionals by placing in the Top Four, "but even the matches we won, we didn't wrestle very well."

"I'm proud of the effort — it wasn't a lack of effort," said Stowers. "It was mostly mental mistakes, things that we normally wouldn't do that



Indian senior Tyler Swanger at Area on Feb. 2 in Commerce. Photo by Chad Stack

we did. We have a lot to work on this week to prepare for this weekend.

"If we wrestle like I know we can, then all four of them will qualify for State. At this level of competition, you can't afford to make a mistake, because if you make a mistake, you go home.

"We're going to work on some of the mental aspects

of the matches this week, and work on some technique stuff that we did wrong this past weekend to get ready for this weekend coming up."

Sectionals is a 12-man bracket, and the competition is going to be much stronger than at Area, though Stowers has full confidence that his Boys in Blue will make it to the Macon Centreplex this year.

# Fairgrounds...from Page 1A

talent, and together, the crowd and judges will decide which band will get the chance of a lifetime.

The judges will assess crowd reaction along with each band member's stage presence, and the group that best commands the attention of the audience while owning the stage will be declared the winner.

And as if earning the chance to open up for Hank Jr. on April 6 wasn't enough, the winning band will also receive a \$500 cash prize.

Blackwell said that the bands that come in Second and Third Place will also have a chance to open for a national act, which will be determined at a later date.

General admission

tickets for the "Best Band in the South" contest will be available starting on March 18 at GeorgiaMountainFairgrounds.com.

Tickets will be \$15 plus handling and fees, and people can also call the Fairgrounds at 706-896-4191 to inquire about tickets.

# Louder...from Page 1A

county, come to understand and appreciate what the Bible says about money and what to do about it, and then pass it on.

"I will tell you, that is what is happening now in Hayesville (NC), it's happening now in Hiawassee, Young Harris — it's going to be happening more and more."

Louder said that when he was working with Crown Financial Ministries, they would refer some folks to Consumer Credit Counseling Services of Atlanta. This, he said, gave them the idea of starting a consumer credit counseling program from a Christian perspective.

"So, we started what was one of the very first Bible-based consumer credit counseling organizations, and I will tell you that it was the most successful consumer credit counseling organization in the United States," said Louder. "We helped them from a Biblical perspective.

"We began to get them into God's Word. And as a result

... our percentage retention rate never fell below 97 percent."

When people would come to him and ask how they did it, Louder told them, "Listen — the Bible makes a difference. Teaching finance from the Bible makes a difference because it's not me motivating them, it's not the IRS, it's not the creditors; it's God.

"And they have a commitment not to the program, but to do it based upon their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It makes a big difference."

However, said Louder, even with the high percentage of people that successfully completed the program, they were seeing many come back.

"About five years ago, in our ministry down in Marietta, we began to see people coming back through again," said Louder. "And even though we were working with them from a biblical perspective, they were still coming back through again.

"Helping people manage their finances by working with

their creditors and giving them a little bit of Bible information was not doing the job. What we saw was that we could do it differently and reach a different population in a different way."

Thus began Christian Financial Ministries and Financial Freedom God's Way Online Academy.

Very simply put, the program works through churches and is a three-phase program: biblical principles and practical budgeting based on biblical principles is done in small groups, and individual applications is a one-on-one format.

There is no cost to participate in this program, but participants are asked to donate what they can afford after they complete the program. It's called paying it forward for the next group, said Louder.

Churches in the area are encouraged to contact Christian Financial Ministries at 678-386-2640 or go online to www.christianfinancialministries.org for more information.

# Penland...from Page 1A

even if they're not sure the information will be helpful.

This includes motorists or other witnesses who may have been traveling through Hayesville on U.S. 64 around the time Penland was killed.

The main office number for the North Carolina State Highway Patrol is 919-733-7952.

Assisting the Highway Patrol with the active and ongoing investigation is the Clay County NC Sheriff's

Office.

Services for Penland were held on Monday, Nov. 19, at Banister Funeral Home, where family and friends gathered to honor his memory.

"Shorty never met a stranger, he would talk to anyone," according to his obituary. "He actually would go out of his way to make certain he spoke to people and made them feel special.

"He put other people's needs and even wants before

his own. He had a huge heart, he would leave a paying job to go help someone for free.

"His sense of humor was never-ending, just his presence made any event more enjoyable. Everyone who met Shorty instantly fell in love with him, because he just made people feel good about themselves.

"He was a hard worker, he loved big, and had an unforgettable smile. He was his mama's 'gentle giant.'"

# Recent update from the Georgia State Senate

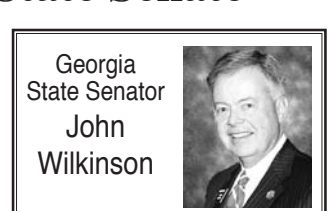
The Senate convened this week after a week of budget hearings only to be impacted by the potential of black ice on Tuesday. At the direction of the Governor and Mayor of Atlanta, the Senate did not conduct business to keep our members and staff off the roads. And while it would seem that the weather slowed things down a little here at the Capitol, we are still hitting the ground running.

Last week was one of the utmost importance to us senators, as it is when we work to accomplish our one constitutionally required duty: pass a balanced budget. In order for us to remain fiscally responsible as a state, while still growing our great businesses and industries, the General Assembly has to do its duty and pass a budget that uses your tax money in the most efficient way possible. I take this responsibility very seriously, and I intend to do everything I can to make sure your needs are accounted for within the budget.

When we began joint budget hearings last week, Governor Brian P. Kemp presented his budget proposals for the Amended Fiscal Year 2019 and the General Fiscal Year 2020 budgets. I was extremely pleased to see that, through the grant money of \$68.8 million for school security, each public school in our district will receive \$30,000 to improve

safety measures. This is outstanding news for the safety of our students and teachers. Students and staff should never feel unsafe in their school, and this money will help fund programs that local school systems see best benefiting their individual schools.

In addition to this, here are a few of my other highlights from the proposed budgets for you all: \$8.4 million for additional mental health counselors in high schools as part of the school safety initiative. There is no doubt that school is stressful and societal pressures can impact your well-being, so I am happy to see money being allocated to address mental health in school. \$500,000 to create a Gang Task Force to combat gang violence. \$2.3 billion for non-interstate corridor improvement and expansion in rural areas. The investment in non-interstate corridors is more great news for rural Georgians, as it is a clear indicator that Governor Kemp is taking the expansion of rural Georgia's economy through growth in infrastructure seriously. A proposed \$34 million appropriation for the purpose of creating a low interest loan program for technical college students. Whether it is the agriculture, health care or film industries, all benefit from a skilled work force. Our TCSG system is strong; job placement out of technical college is 99.3 percent and 55.3



Georgia State Senator John Wilkinson

percent of Dual Enrollment students taking technical college courses.

If you have any questions about legislation or the legislative process, please feel free to contact my office by phone or email. Please let me know if you would like to come to my office at the Capitol, my door is always open. It is a pleasure to represent the 50th Senate District.

Sen. John Wilkinson serves as Chairman of the Agriculture and Consumer Affairs Committee and also as Caucus Secretary to the Majority Party. He represents the 50th Senate District which includes Banks, Franklin, Habersham, Rabun, Stephens and Towns counties and portions of Hall and Jackson counties. He can be reached by phone at 404-463-5257 or by email at john.wilkinson@senate.ga.gov.

# Blue Ridge man arrested on drug charges wanted in multiple counties

News Special  
Towns County Herald

On Monday, Jan. 28, deputies with the Towns County Sheriff's Office responded to a Hiawassee residence on Sims Road in reference to an unwanted subject.

When they arrived on the scene, deputies located a male believed to be the unwanted subject.

After completing an initial investigation into the dispatched call, deputies arrested Derek Mitchell Mashburn, 25, of

Blue Ridge, on the following charges: one count possession of methamphetamine; one count possession of drug-related objects; and one count giving a false name to a law enforcement officer.

Upon further investigation, deputies determined that Mashburn was also wanted on warrants from both Fannin County and Bartow County.

The Towns County warrants and charges will be forwarded to the Enotah Judicial Circuit District Attorney's Office for prosecution.



Derek Mitchell Mashburn

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