

TCHS...from Page 1A

the school is the even bigger victory," said Coach West.

The team members certainly agree.

"I will never forget the laughs and experiences and succeeding together," Emily Williams said, while Ben Edwards stated, "Academic team has been an awesome experience. The intellectual challenge and competition is great."

Connor Kelley chimed in, too, saying, "There just

isn't another extracurricular quite like it. Win or lose, we're always excited to try to beat the next opponent."

The next opponent on the docket will be a lesson in business management, since the team will now begin fundraising for a chance to play for national trophies, to eat Chicago hot dogs at Wrigley Field, to ride the Sears Tower Elevator, and to pursue dinosaurs and mummies at the Field Museum.

The tournament will be held from April 27 to April 29 at the Chicago O'Hare Hyatt Regency. Any donations that community businesses or individuals might make to defray travel and registration expenses would be well appreciated by the team.

For more information, please call the high school at (706) 896-4131 and ask for Ken Camp or Becky West.

The team is honored to represent Towns County on a national stage.

Counterfeit...from Page 1A

Lynn, 56, of Union County, have both been arrested and charged with financial identity fraud, forgery in the third degree, and theft by deception, according to the sheriff's office.

Last year, Osborne and Lynn entered into a lease-to-own agreement with a Blairsville business, and the original owners of the business reported the crime the week of Jan. 29, 2018, per UCSCO Lt. Daren Osborn, no relation.

"These two gentlemen had a check that they deposited in a local bank here in Blairsville, and the check was a counterfeit, fraud check," said Lt. Osborn. "The check was from the City of Keene in Texas. It was made out to the business for \$1,550."

The check was allegedly for the sale of a table that never changed hands, and Osborne and Lynn took the money out of the account the same day as the deposit, according to Lt. Osborn.

Unfortunately for the

original owners, who shared the account with Osborne and Lynn, the account went negative after the bank discovered the check was counterfeit and reversed the bad deposit, according to Lt. Osborn.

"The victims had to come up with money out of their own personal accounts to put into that account to get it back in the black," said Lt. Osborn. "And then they suspended the account to keep these two out of it."

Continued Osborn: "The owners of the business came in and filed a report. I looked into it and called the City of Keene Police Department, and they have had fraudulent checks duplicated on their city accounts."

"They have the postal inspectors involved in it, due to the fact that they'd been mailed out Priority for the Postal Service. Also, the Texas Rangers are involved in this investigation, and it's probably going to turn into a federal

case." Per state law, the crime of identity fraud is committed when a person willingly and fraudulently, and without authorization or consent, "creates, uses, or possesses with intent to fraudulently use any counterfeit or fictitious identifying information concerning a real person with intent to use such counterfeit or fictitious identification information for the purpose of committing or facilitating the commission of a crime or fraud on another person."

Bank account numbers are considered identifying information under state law, and the account information located on the fake check was real and belonged to the City of Keene, Texas, according to Lt. Osborn.

"When you steal and take money that doesn't belong to you, we enforce the law," said Lt. Osborn. "I would advise these victims and others, when you're making business dealings with anybody, you need to do it with an attorney and not do it on your own."

Hiwassee...from Page 1A

stated on multiple occasions that the franchise fees – likely to cost less than \$4 a month on average for residential customers – will be a vital source of revenue to improve city infrastructure, especially since county SPLOST collections are a thing of the past.

The franchise fees would be collected from all EMC account holders inside Hiwassee City Limits, and would appear as line items on EMC utility bills to the tune of 4 percent of gross electric sales based on kWh usage, and 5 percent of gross cable and fiber sales.

Also in the meeting, the mayor talked about the city's recent landscape Request For Proposal, as the city is wanting to hire someone to do its landscaping, and bids are due Feb. 12 in sealed envelopes.

Ordiales touched briefly on the upcoming Carl Vinson Institute Strategic Plan for the city in the work session. The cost of the strategic plan will be covered by \$30,000 in grant funds.

Once more, the mayor spoke on the to-be-revised distribution model of Hotel-Motel Tax, which will allow the city to keep 60 percent of its Hotel-Motel Tax revenues versus the former \$5,000 cap.

The remaining 40 percent of these revenues would continue to go to the Towns County Chamber of Commerce, but the city will save upwards of \$40,000 under the soon-to-be adopted guidelines.

"I would love to dedicate that money for a downtown development person, so they're responsible to go out and find the nice restaurants, the general stores, the whatever, and bring it into town," said Ordiales.

Mayor Ordiales highlighted yet another old loan through the USDA, from 1989, that she is looking to restructure or pay off in the near future, and she welcomed the folks from AirMedCare to make a presentation before adjourning the meeting.

The city will be renewing its contract to cover residents on the AirMedCare Network for medically necessary helicopter life flights, and the cost of that renewal will be \$4,900.



Hiwassee City Attorney Thomas Mitchell swearing in City Councilwoman Patsy Owens in the Jan. 29 work session.

Photo by Shawn Jarrard



Hiwassee City Councilmembers Amy Barrett and Kris Berrong on Jan. 29, 2018.

Photo by Shawn Jarrard

Hiwassee Police Chief Paul Smith delivered some crime stats from 2017, and communicated that the city police would keep up their efforts to combat drug use and other illegal activities that may occur within city limits.

Following the meeting, the council held a public hearing led by engineer Don Baker with EMI, concerning major upcoming sewer plant work.

Hiwassee is looking to expand its Wastewater Treatment Facility from a treatment capacity of 300,000 gallons per day to 500,000 gallons per day, as well as rehabilitate the Hiwassee Beach lift station and add a new pipe alongside the Hiwassee Bridge to replace the current force main.

"The WWTF is nearing capacity and an expansion is needed," per meeting materials. "This expansion would provide

the city the ability to treat additional wastewater flow.

"Improvements include adding an influent screen to existing headworks and modifying the headworks, adding an additional UV disinfection system, and rehabilitating of the pre-equalization tank."

Continued the materials: "The estimated cost for the project is \$1.4 million and includes anticipated soft costs, including land acquisition."

"Proposed funding sources include a \$600,000 grant through the Appalachian Regional Commission, and \$800,000 through a low-interest loan through the Georgia Environmental Finance Authority."

The expansion and upgrades are slated to be finished by January 2019, though Ordiales said she was hopeful the city could complete the work before then.

FBLA...from Page 1A

Chapter Award, which recognizes the chapter with the most members, was accepted by Chase Williams, President.

Towns FBLA also received a Second-Place award in the FBLA Sweepstakes, a trophy given to the chapters who have the most "wins" at region competition. This award was accepted by Advisers Melissa McConnell and Ruth Taylor, and Officers Chase Williams, Kendall Floyd, Chase Rogers, Emily Williams and Taylor Cornett.

Congratulations to all competitors who gave generously of their time and dedicated themselves to representing our chapter with excellence. Your academic preparation and effort is reflected in your success.

The FBLA State Leadership Conference and Competitions will be held March



Chase Williams, Region 13 Vice President, helps conduct FBLA Awards Ceremony.

23 through 25 in Atlanta.

Nine additional competitors from TCHS FBLA will be joining these regional winners to compete

in "straight-to-state events" at state conference.

Good luck, Towns County FBLA!

Jackson...from Page 1A

people into the local workforce, thereby promoting area industry through programs and community involvement.

Recently, the college has taken its community commitment to the next level with a project aimed at helping local businesses.

"A project that we've started that I'm excited to have been a part of starting is a Small and Emerging Business Group," said Jackson. "We're going to be working with anybody who has a small business with nine employees or less, or if you have 10 or 12 employees and you have special needs."

"We are working with people who need help writing business plans, financing statements – with people who need to learn how to market the product they're making. There are lots and lots of people in these mountains who know how to do crafts or arts, but they don't know what to do with it when they get through."

Through this program, North Georgia Tech will be helping small businesses and students alike, by enabling students to take what they learn in the classroom and implement it in a real-world business setting, all at no cost to the business.

"I can't tell you how rewarding it is when you see someone who has a business and they want that business to grow," said Jackson. "Their heart is in it, but they're just not sure exactly where they need to go."

"The school furnishes people who are in school and are taking these classes at the college that will come over and work with these people. It is amazing how the small business community has responded to the things that we're doing."

In addition to the Small and Emerging Businesses Project, North Georgia Tech is beginning



Michael Borkman of Hayesville, North Carolina, is a frequent emcee at the Mountain Movers and Shakers weekly meetings in Hiwassee.

Photo by Lily Avery

a new apprenticeship program.

Under this program, businesses can recommend exceptional employees to be considered for a free, all expenses paid education at North Georgia Tech.

"The state of Georgia and the governor are supporting this," said Jackson. "The state has identified some high demand technical jobs, things like air conditioning and welding."

According to Jackson, not only is there a shortage of a technical job workforce in Georgia, but across the nation as well.

Many high school graduates pursue collegiate educations and acquire four-year degrees, but few are pursuing technical skills that are a necessity for economic sustainability.

This new program will hopefully encourage more technical skills certificate recipients and build a larger workforce for these areas of need.

"With this apprenticeship program, we will go to the small businesses and manufacturers and other businesses and talk to them," said Jackson. "We will ask if they have an employee that they believe in and want to see succeed and want them to continue to work for them as a career. It's amazing how many who say yes."

"We will take that employee, that employee will continue to work a 40-hour work week just like everybody else does. The companies will pay the employee, just like everybody else."

"We will bring that person to North Georgia Technical College to any of our three campuses that we have. They will be able to take one course, or more than one course if they'd like, in the field that their company wants them to be trained in. And we will give them a diploma or certificate."

This program is part of a larger partnership between the U.S. Department of Labor and the technical college system across the nation to promote technical skills and industry workforce.

According to Jackson, this offers the best of both worlds for those who want to receive an education and pursue a career, but who are not best suited for a regular collegiate experience.

Even though it is in the beginning stages, North Georgia Technical College has high hopes for the program and all that it will be able to bring to the North Georgia Mountains.

"We are working hard to help you have great communities," said Jackson. "We're here to help business owners, and to help the residents to learn how to do the things they want to do."

Art contest to benefit Hamilton Gardens

Hamilton Gardens invites you to submit your two dimensional art in their "As Our Gardens Grow" art contest. This contest will benefit Hamilton Gardens at Lake Chatuge, Inc. and is the forerunner to A Blooming Affair at Hamilton Gardens. On April 14 and for several weekends following, there will be plant sales and various activities to celebrate the beauty of the Gardens and share with the community what is happening as our gardens grow.

Artists are encouraged to include one or several botanical elements in a creative yet realistic piece. The image size must be no smaller than 11" x 14" in oil, acrylic, watercolor, mixed media or drawing. Cash prizes will be awarded to the first, second, and third place winners with amounts to be

announced later. The deadline to enter your art will be April 20th.

Our friends at Artworks in Hiwassee will be displaying all of the entries beginning April 23rd. ArtWorks Gallery is owned and operated by the Mountain Regional Arts and Crafts Guild, Inc. a 501(c)(3) organization, where members may sell their work and share their expertise with students on a regular basis by teaching classes. Artists participating in Hamilton Gardens' Art Contest, with the exception of the winner, may have their art entries available for sale while the exhibition is open at Artworks. A complete set of rules and guidelines and an entry form are available at hamiltongardens.org. You may also call (706)970-0011 for more information. ✎

Local child advocates to attend CASA Day at Capitol

CASA Day at the Capitol will take place on Thu., Feb. 14, at the State Capitol in Atlanta. About 12 child advocates from Enotah CASA plan to attend.

An annual event hosted by Georgia Court Appointed Special Advocates (Georgia CASA), Inc., the day centers around CASA volunteers, board members and staff from across the state meeting with members of the Georgia Legislature to thank them for their support of the CASA organization and to share concerns about the abused and neglected children in foster care that their CASA programs serve.

This year's event in-

cludes a legislative briefing, meeting with legislators and a luncheon to thank the legislators for their support of the CASA organization and child welfare issues.

Enotah CASA is an affiliate of Georgia CASA, a nonprofit organization with 46 community-based affiliate programs. The CASA program is central to fulfilling society's most fundamental obligation by making sure a qualified, compassionate adult will fight for and protect a child's right to be safe, to be treated with dignity and respect and to learn and grow in the safe embrace of a loving family.

Last year, over 2,400 CASA volunteers in Georgia served over 11,200 abused and neglected children. Locally, 68 CASA volunteers served 291 children in Lumpkin, Towns, Union and White counties.

For more information about your community's CASA program and/or local attendance at CASA Day at the Capitol, contact Linda D'Angelo at 706-864-0300 or director@enotahcasa.org. To learn more about the CASA organization throughout Georgia, visit www.gacasa.org or call 404-874-2888/800-251-4012. NT/EB7MJ/SH