

# Towns County Herald

Legal Organ of Towns County

www.townscountyherald.net

Your Hometown Newspaper Since 1928

75 Cents

Publication Number 635540 Volume 90 Number 15

Wednesday, February 13, 2019

## City Council awards \$1.3 million water treatment plant project to SOL

By Mark Smith  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

The Hiawassee City Council officially awarded the water treatment plant expansion project to SOL Construction of Atlanta at the bid price of \$1.3 million at the monthly city meeting on Tuesday, Feb. 5.

Hiawassee Mayor Liz Ordiales said that the bids for the water treatment plant expansion project ranged from \$1.3 million to \$1.8 million. Given their good reputation and the fact that they had the lowest bid, her recommendation was to award the contract to SOL Construction.

As previously reported, SOL Construction has pledged to use local contractors whenever possible. The council voted unanimously to approve the award. In other council news, a lengthy discussion took place concerning banner signs prior to the council's unanimous approval of the second reading of the new Hiawassee Sign Ordinance.

Councilmembers Nancy Noblet and Anne Mitchell had concerns about charging a fee for banner signs that were not meant to be displayed for more than 30 to 60 days. Per a written recommendation from City Attorney Thomas Mitchell, who was not present, one paragraph was replaced in the ordinance, removing the fee from banner signs permitted for 60 days or less.



Hiawassee Mayor Liz Ordiales with Joint Economic Development Director Denise McKay in the Feb. 5 regular city meeting. Photo by Mark Smith

## Sparks shares concerns over next football season in BOE meeting

By Mark Smith  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

Towns County High School junior Shane Sparks addressed the members of the Towns County Board of Education in their monthly work session on Thursday, Feb. 7.



Towns County High School students Chase Rogers and Shane Sparks in the Feb. 7 work session of the Towns County Board of Education. Photo by Mark Smith

Sparks, who plays lineman and the high school football team, voiced his concerns about the team losing over half its players to graduation this year, leaving only 13 returning players for the 2019-2020 football season.

## Kendall Floyd named 2019 STAR Student at Towns County High

By Chad Stack  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

Congratulations to Kendall Floyd, who has been named 2019 STAR Student for Towns County High School. Floyd selected his Elementary School math teacher and FBLA adviser Ruth Taylor as his STAR Teacher, to highlight the impact Taylor has had on his academic successes.



Towns County High School's 2019 STAR Student Kendall Floyd with his STAR Teacher, Ruth Taylor. Photo by Chad Stack

Speaking on why he chose Taylor to serve as his STAR Teacher, Floyd mentioned her kindness and motivational nature. "I always felt like I was learning something in her class," said Floyd. Floyd earned a respectable 1340 score on the SAT. The first time he took it.

## Lee, Thomason and Bradshaw host Mountain Movers and Shakers meeting



Grace Howard, Cliff Bradshaw, Hilda Thomason and Candace Lee in the Feb. 8 meeting of the Mountain Movers and Shakers. Photo by Mark Smith

Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw introduced Chamber of Commerce President Candace Lee and Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds Manager Hilda Thomason at the Mountain Movers and Shakers meeting on Friday, Feb. 8, at the Sundance Grill.

"We have strived to increase and improve all the county services that we offer without raising our millage rate, increasing taxes," said Bradshaw. "The more people who come here, the more people that will come back and buy a lot and build a house."

## Union General ready to move on after \$5 million DOJ settlement



Physicians and medical staff at Union General Hospital pose for a photo to show their solidarity in support of the hospital.

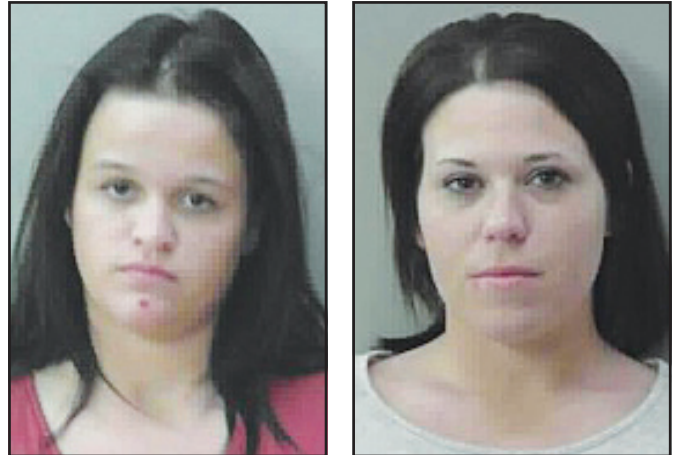
The U.S. Department of Justice announced on Feb. 6 that Union General Hospital had agreed to pay a \$5 million settlement to resolve allegations that it violated the False Claims Act by engaging in improper financial relationships with referring physicians. These allegations stemmed from the findings of an independent internal compliance investigation commissioned by the hospital in 2016 following the arrest of former hospital CEO Mike Gowder on unrelated prescription drug fraud charges.

Retiring CEO Lewis Kelley said that the hospital paid the settlement out of its general fund last month, and he added that the hospital is still financially sound. "The No. 1 thing that we would like to share with the public is that we're glad that this is behind us, because this has been looming out there for close to two and a half years now," said Kelley. "We're glad to put it behind us and glad to move forward."

## Sheriff's Office arrests two local women on prostitution charges

By News Special  
Towns County Herald

Investigators with the Towns County Sheriff's Office recently received information that illegal prostitution activity had been occurring in the county. Once investigators confirmed the information, the Sheriff's Office launched an undercover investigation and sting operation that took place on Saturday, Feb. 9.



Cassie Cooper and Samantha Dye arrested when they arrived to meet the informant along with undercover officers. The investigation is active and ongoing and additional arrests and charges may be forthcoming.

2 Sections 16 Pages  
Lake Levels  
Blue Ridge 1,673.47  
Chatuge 1,919.50  
Nottely 1,761.04

SPORTS  
BASKETBALL - STATE  
Feb. 15 Girls - vs. Lanier Co.  
WRESTLING - STATE  
Feb. 13-16 Macon Centreplex

Iwo Jima Remembrance  
Feb 18 10 AM  
New Rec. Center

Order your 4-H Vidalia Onions  
See page 2A

Dual Enrollment Meeting @ TCHS  
See page 3A