

# EMC...from Page 1A

for fiscal year 2019 was well underway.

The plan includes \$740,000 in total funding and will reach neighborhoods in all five counties serviced by the EMC.

Areas in Union County to receive fiber expansion under the program include Forest Drive, Boxborough Drive, Pleasant Hill Road, Murphy

Drive, Canal Lake and Litton Way.

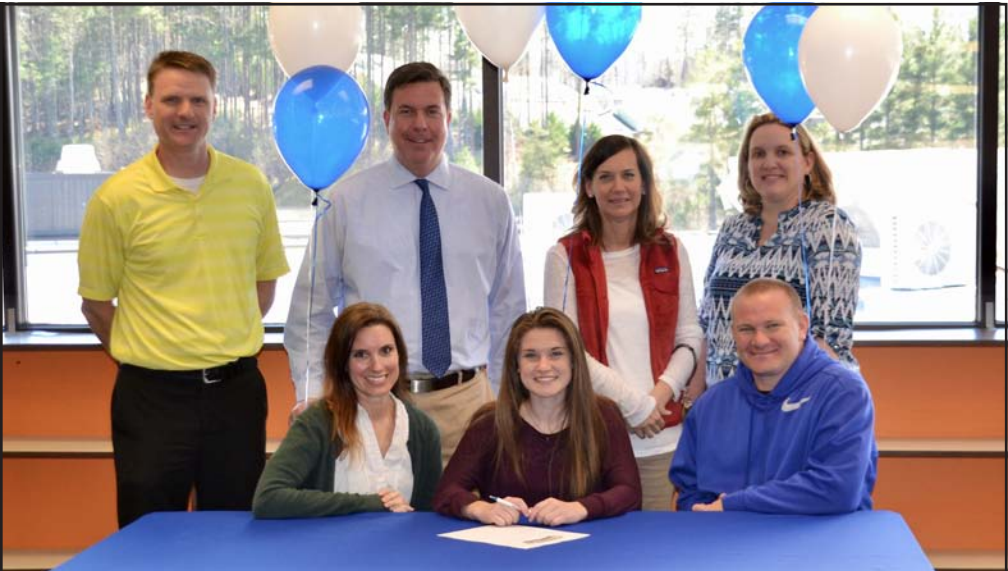
In Towns County, areas to receive fiber expansion include Bald Mountain Park, Holly Hills, Tater Ridge, Hiawassee Estates, Old Forge Estates, and parts of Lower Bell Creek and Upper Bell Creek.

So far, all of the above locations have been staked, and systemwide, nine locations

have been built or are in the process of being built.

Of those nine, four have been completed and have garnered new account signups. Two full crews are working toward completing the project before the end of the fiscal year, with a plan to add a third crew to ensure the EMC meets its deadline.

# Cornett...from Page 1A



Cornett with her family and school administrators during a March 18 celebration in the Towns County High School Media Center. Photo by Chad Stack

against. I continued to tell her that her hard work would pay off eventually.

“Through high school, she started to get faster and stronger because of all the work she put into the weight room. Soon, she was stronger and faster than most girls. So, to see that all pay off when she was not only a reward for her but a reward for me and Kelly as well.

“She loves to compete, and not only compete, but succeed. Kelly and I love watching her play because she plays to win. As a father and coach, it has been one of the most rewarding experiences I have had.”

Taylor plays multiple sports at the High School, but her love of soccer really shines on the field.

“I have been playing soccer since I was really young, I absolutely love the sport,” said Taylor. “When I was growing

up, I loved watching Hope Solo and Mia Hamm play.”

She’s not only talented on a soccer field and as an athlete generally but also very humble in her freshman year goals as an upcoming college soccer player.

“I just want to go in and prove to myself that I can compete at the college level, possibly earn some playing time and a spot on the travel team,” said Taylor.

Having played multiple sports while making time for her studies and getting good grades in high school will surely help her to manage college while playing soccer, said Taylor.

“All my teammates have been really supportive through the whole process, even when I had to miss basketball practices to try out and visit colleges, and my basketball coach was also in full support,” said Taylor.

She has some advice for others who would follow in her

footsteps in playing a sport at the collegiate level.

“Don’t wait till the last minute,” said Taylor. “If you think you want to play or have a chance to play, start training at a young age and work your butt off. It’s important to keep your touch on the ball, and the only way to do that is to play soccer as often as possible.”

Fortunately for Taylor Cornett, who has several academic scholarships, her upcoming coach has worked it to where her soccer scholarship will cover the remaining cost of her tuition.

And though she’s undecided on what she wants to do after college – she’s leaning toward acquiring a business degree – Taylor still has plenty of time to figure that out.

The Lady Indians Soccer Team has a goal this season to make a run in the Georgia High School Association Single-A State Playoffs, just as they did last year.



Taylor plays soccer for her dad, Lady Indian Head Coach John Cornett. Photo by Chad Stack

# Firewise...from Page 1A

The power tools will only be loaned out to coalition community members who are trained to use them safely and properly.

Courey also announced that the four-day Wildland Urban Interface meeting, sponsored by the International Association of Fire Chiefs, will be held in Reno, Nevada, from March 26 through March 29. Both he and Georgia Firewise Liaison Frank Riley will attend.

The University of Georgia Experimental Station Firewise Presentation will take place on March 29 from 9:30 a.m. to noon. Riley and Georgia Forestry Chief Ranger Tony Harkins will present.

The Experimental Station, aka the Georgia Mountain Research & Education Center, is located at 195 Hill Road, about three miles south of

Blairsville off US 129 South.

The Towns County Firewise Citizens Coalition will have a Community Membership Meeting and Public Forum in place of its regular board meeting on April 16 from 1 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the Towns County Civic Center.

There will be food and beverages and lots of Firewise information for people and communities who are interested in forging more fire-safe neighborhoods.

Wildfire Community Preparedness Day will take place on May 4 at the north parking lot of Hiawassee Hardware at 139 North Main Street, across from Ingles Gas Express. It will be a joint effort with the Towns County Fire Department.

Towns County Fire Chief Harold Copeland, also

a Firewise Coalition Board Member, will have firefighters and fire apparatus there for people to see and for children to explore.

The Georgia Prescribed Fire Council meeting will be held on June 6 in Jasper. Several Firewise Coalition members will be attending that meeting. A prescribed fire is the same thing as a controlled burn, which thins out the underbrush that fuels brushfires.

The coalition will also have booths at both the Home & Garden Show and the Made in Georgia Exhibit, which will be held at the Towns County Recreation and Conference Center at Foster Park.

The Home & Garden Show will be held June 8 through June 9, and the Made in Georgia Exhibit will be held June 29 through June 30.

# Gowder...from Page 1A

learn little to nothing about a case before trial, cases tried from the bench present unique opportunities to shape the judge’s opinion of the case prior to trial.”

Story had not issued a decision regarding the nonjury trial request by press time.

Gowder’s request for a nonjury trial, aka bench trial, comes on the heels of other developments in the case, most recently a second superseding criminal indictment handed up on March 19 by a federal grand jury.

The main reason for the issuance of a second superseding indictment appears to have been the severance of David Gowder, Mike’s brother, as a defendant in the case following his March 15 guilty plea to one of 53 charges against him.

Initially, Heaton and both Gowder brothers were federally indicted in April 2018, with a superseding indictment taking place of the original in January 2019. That first superseding indictment included 62 additional charges against Heaton.

Heaton, Mike and David Gowder all pleaded not guilty to the charges contained in

the original and superseding indictments.

Then, David changed his plea to guilty in a March 15 Change of Plea Hearing, admitting to one count of prescribing oxycodone without a legitimate medical purpose.

Resulting from his guilty plea, David agreed to forfeit his Georgia medical license. Furthermore, he is facing up to 20 years in prison and a fine of up to \$1 million, and his sentencing will likely occur after his former co-defendants’ trial comes to a close.

The second superseding indictment handed up on March 19 features Mike Gowder and Heaton as the only defendants in the federal prescription drug case, and last week, both men once again pleaded not guilty to the federal charges against them.

Federal prosecutors have asked the state and U.S. Marshals to produce as witnesses in the upcoming trial four individuals who are currently serving state prison sentences for various drug-related offenses: Timothy Harkins, Julie McPherson, Curtis Mason and Kevin Rogers.

For reasons unknown at press time, the request for Harkins had been returned unexecuted by U.S. Marshals on March 18.

Gowder and Heaton stand accused of many criminal charges – 150 for Gowder and 213 for Heaton – involving alleged illegal prescription drug activity in at least three states, including conspiracy to dispense and distribute controlled substances “outside the usual course of professional medical practice and for no legitimate medical purpose.”

They are 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 Union General Hospital and Dr. Heaton ran a family practice clinic in Blairsville.

Heaton also served as the director of the hospital’s Nursing Home and as a member of the hospital’s Board of Directors, per court documents.

# County Meeting...from Page 1A

they have been out cutting grass at the beach, and we have been cleaning up our county beach. It will be opening soon. I’m very, very picky about trying to make our county look as presentable and as good as possible so more people will come and stay at Bald Mountain Park and other places in the county.”

Bradshaw said that, as soon as the weather permits, he’ll be getting a detainee crew to pressure wash and paint the exterior of the Towns County Courthouse, which will likely occur sometime this summer.

In other news, Bradshaw talked about the baseball fields at Foster Park. One of the fields has had a drainage issue, and the county has been working on the outfield trying to get the field in playing condition in time for the upcoming little league season to begin.

Another issue Bradshaw touched on during the meeting was the Old Rec Gym, which is

still used by children, pickleball players and the Towns County Historical Society as a headquarters.

The building has several bad leaks in the roof, which has actually been repaired a number of times over the years, so Bradshaw went into detail about the plan to replace the roof.

“If we need to, we’re going to do a called county meeting once we get the bids, and I’ll call the references of the ones I think we are going to use,” said Bradshaw. “We called our insurance.

“They are coming out (March 21) to look at it. They are not going to pay for having the roof fixed, of course, but any water damage to the paint on the walls or the floor, our insurance will probably cover for that, so we want to make that part of the building as new as possible.”

Towns County has had a great deal of rain this year, inadvertently causing damage to a metal storage building

located behind Foster Park.

All the rainwater has created hydrostatic pressure, causing the ground where the building sits to be pushed up, which in turn is twisting and turning the metal siding on the building.

“We are meeting (March 21) with an engineer that does this type of thing to see what he has to say,” said Bradshaw. “When we meet with the insurance company for the (Old Rec Gym), I’m going to show them that, too.

“I don’t know if that will be covered or not. Either way, it has got to be fixed. We want people to know where their money is going, but that is going to have to be fixed to protect our property up there.”

Bradshaw amended the retirement plan for Towns County employees. The amended plan is for Towns County to match up to 4 percent.

# TCSO arrests Calhoun woman on drug charges after traffic stop

News Special  
Towns County Herald

YOUNG HARRIS – The Towns County Sheriff’s Office arrested a woman on drug charges following a traffic stop on Saturday, March 23.

Resulting from a traffic violation, a Towns County deputy stopped a white Jeep Liberty on Georgia 66 that Saturday.

Upon further investigation into the traffic stop, the deputy arrested Mary Ann Walker, 54, of Calhoun, on the

following charges: possession of methamphetamine, possession of marijuana, possession of drug-related objects, and violation of brake light requirement.

The investigation is active and ongoing, and the case will be referred to the Enotah Judicial Circuit District Attorney’s Office for prosecution.

All individuals are presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.



Mary Ann Walker