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Friends, family gather to honor Iwo Jima Veteran Todd Kimsey

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

YOUNG HARRIS – The loved one of Hiawassee's Todd Kimsey, who passed away at the Towns County Recreation and Conference Center for a Celebration of Life Memorial Service in his honor on Saturday, May 11.

Kimsey, who spent 37 years of his life teaching students at Towns County High and Young Harris College, passed away at the age of 93 on Saturday, April 27.

As a veteran of the U.S. Navy who served at the Battle of Iwo Jima, Kimsey was eligible to receive Military Honors, which were conducted by the North Georgia Honor Guard inside the conference center due to the rainy weather.

These honors included a firing followed by the playing of "Taps" and a ceremonial folding of Kimsey's burial flag, which North Georgia Honor Guard Chaplain Roy Bateman presented to Hellen Kimsey, Todd's loving wife of more than 70 years.

Several distinguished guests spoke in his honor with their heartfelt words of gratitude for her husband as to share with others their cherished warm remembrances of him.

John Harkins, commander of American Legion Post 23, acted as master of ceremonies for the service.

Harkins talked about Kimsey's love of the Legion and how the Iwo Jima Veteran always made him feel as if he were "in the presence of greatness."

American Legion Post 23 Chaplain Scott Drummond, who has been a close friend of the Kimseys for many years now, offered the opening prayer.

Drummond implored those present not to forget their friend was "now enjoying his eternal life at the right hand of our one and only Heavenly Father."

Delivering the eulogy on Saturday was Professor Kimsey's former student and fellow veteran, Ray Lambert, who called Kimsey "a good friend and a mentor."

Lambert referred to the Kimseys as an "absolute team," using Proverbs to describe the pair.

Likening Todd to Proverbs 27:17, Lambert said

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Hellen Kimsey receiving her husband's burial flag from Chaplain Roy Bateman on May 11. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

Former Sheriff Eller remembered for compassion, friendship in life

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

When Rudy Eller, 74, died at the end of March, the mountains lost a larger-than-life former lawman who was much beloved by all who knew him.

Of course, some folks will only recall Eller's one big mistake in an otherwise sterling career – covering up evidence of a crime committed by one of his deputies – which landed him in prison for a brief time over a decade ago.

But the people who knew him best, including his fellow law enforcement officers, say it was a mistake borne out of loyalty to a friend.

And it was loyalty to a friend that, in 1974, brought justice for the late Sheriff Jay Vernon Chastain Sr., as then-Deputy Eller was among the lawmen who gunned down Chastain's roadside killer before anyone else could be hurt.

Funeral services were held for Eller at the beginning of April, and the pews of the chapel at Cochran Funeral Home of Hiawassee were filled with many of Eller's former colleagues in law enforcement.

They attended the services to show support for the family, for Eller's wife Rachel and his children, but also to pay their last respects to Eller himself, who played a major role in most of their lives.



Rudy Eller passed away on March 30, 2019.

Following the senseless murder of Sheriff Chastain, Eller did his best to fill his friend's shoes as sheriff for a couple of years in the mid-1970s before moving on to work in the private sector.

He returned to Towns County law enforcement in the early to mid-1990s, heading up the old Towns/Union County Jail under Sheriff Rudy Roach.

Eller won election to the office of sheriff in 1996 and again in 2000, and he would hold the office in Towns County for about 10 years.

As sheriff, Eller expanded the presence of law enforcement in the county, helping to keep the area safer by attracting many people to work for him.

He also started several

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Alcohol not a factor in Silvers' death, says NC Medical Examiner

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

When Terry Silvers' white Toyota pickup smashed headfirst into Tracie Stewart's Honda Accord the evening of Feb. 23, 2019, causing Silvers' death, many people rightly wondered why.

Silvers had been driving erratically leading up to the crash, swerving all over the road, according to testimony obtained through a now infamous 911 call.

He had been traveling from Towns County toward Hayesville, North Carolina, that Saturday, and the fatal collision occurred after Silvers' northbound vehicle for some reason maneuvered into the southbound lane of NC-69 in Clay County.

There has been much speculation as to the cause of Silvers' irregular driving that evening, with public



Terry Silvers' wrecked truck at the scene of his Feb. 23 fatal accident on NC-69 in Hayesville, North Carolina. Photo by Becky Long/Clay County Progress

comments being made by the man's friends, family and fellow residents alleging drug addiction.

Unfortunately, those in the community who have been

waiting for some closure in the case – those looking for a reason why Silvers crashed – may never find it.

According to the

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Gene Watson returning to Anderson Music Hall on Saturday, June 1

By Mark Smith
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Country music icon Gene Watson, who began his career nearly 60 years ago and has contributed as much as if not more than any other star to the genre, will return to Anderson Music Hall on Saturday, June 1.

"I've been coming to Hiawassee for so many years," said Watson. "I've been playing there a long, long time, and people know that they're going to get everything I've got to offer – from the song that got me started, 'Love in the Hot Afternoon,' plumb on up.

"We usually work our way through the songs of my career. But, you know, I'm one artist that never writes a show down. It always comes off the top of my head, and the band has to be listening to me to know what song is going to be next.

"I just try my best to work my way up through the songs of my career. I try my best to play all the songs they want to hear. We just have a great time in Hiawassee every time we come there. It's just a great homecoming for us.

"People come from all over the state and all over North Carolina and everywhere else to be with us, so I'm sure we're going to have a good time. After each and every show, I always stay to sign autographs, shake hands and take pictures. It's a great get-together, and we really enjoy coming to Hiawassee."

Watson said that Lorrie Morgan, who will be headlining with him on June 1, is not only one of his favorite people but also "one of my favorite artists, too."

"I'm so much looking forward to it," said Watson. "We've appeared on a lot of television together and we've done shows together. We've known each other for a lot of years, and she's a sweetheart."



Gene Watson

For Watson, being on the road today is actually much easier than it was 10 or 15 years ago, which he attributes to the fact

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Four seniors honored in 'Georgia Future Educators Signing Day' ceremony



Kenzlee Denton, Emily Williams, Alli Patterson and Savannah Mitchell with their families for Georgia Future Educators Signing Day on May 7. Photo by Chad Stack

By Chad Stack
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Towns County Schools recognized four seniors who plan on becoming teachers during a special ceremony held in the high school media center on May 7.

Savannah Mitchell, Kenzie Denton, Alli Patterson and Emily Williams were honored that Tuesday for having decided to pursue careers in education.

Much like an athletic

signing day, Georgia Future Educators Signing Day was created to celebrate high school students going to college for degrees in education.

In attendance for the signing ceremony were High School Principal Dr. Connie Hobbs, Assistant Principal Jim Melton, Counselor Lana Parker, Curriculum Director Stephanie Moss, Superintendent Dr. Darren Berrong, and the families of the young future educators.

"Georgia State Superintendent Richard Woods

started this several years ago, and the thought process behind that was, we have signing days for athletes who are going on to play a sport, but he felt it is just as important for our students who are going on (for education) to have that same experience," said Berrong. "First off, I just want to say how proud we are of all of you for choosing education.

"You have a valuable career ahead of you, and the impact that you will make on your students will go far

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State denies \$310,000 grant for 21st Century Afterschool Program

By Chad Stack
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Members of the Towns County Board of Education learned in their May 6 work session at the board office that state funding for the 21st Century Afterschool Program had been denied for the 2019-2020 school year.

Program Director Jenny Stowers informed the board of the state's decision, letting them know that the loss in funding – \$310,000 a year for the next five years – could jeopardize the program.

Towns County has received the grant three times previously, though Stowers said that, this time, the grant application was deemed "too vague" by the state, though Superintendent Dr. Darren Berrong believes the state may be denying the grant to higher

achieving schools.

The program helps working parents with afterschool care of students by providing supervision and enrichment activities at the end of each school day.

Currently, more than 100 students in pre-K through 12th grade take part in a number of highly beneficial afterschool activities, such as remediation and Georgia Milestones prep, credit recovery, attendance recovery and drivers education.

Stowers and the board office are looking at options to help fund the program until they can reapply for the grant next year.

Towns County Afterschool will be hosting a parent meeting on Thursday, May 16, at 5 p.m. in the high school cafeteria to discuss funding options to keep the



Jenny Stowers

program going in the absence of grant monies.

In other news, Finance Director Myra Underwood reported that, through April,

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