

Historical Society discusses its own history

By Lily Avery
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Everyone and everything has its own personal history, a point in time when it all began. The same can be said of the Towns County Historical Society.

The group reminisced over its inception and many accomplishments along the way at the monthly meeting at the Old Recreation Center on Monday, Oct. 10.

While many in the society have seen the ups and downs of the club throughout the years, no one knows it better than one of its founding members, Joan Crothers.

According to Crothers, although the Historical Society was officially founded in 2000, it had many startups before finally taking off.

Before Crothers joined the group of society members that created the existing organization, three individuals tried their hand at establishing the club in 1981, meeting at the Mountain Regional Library in Young Harris.

However, after only a few years, the group fizzled out and did not reemerge until Crothers saw an ad in the newspaper over a decade later.

"I saw an ad in the paper about a historical society meeting, I high-tailed it over there," said Crothers. "Now, this was advertised in 1999 by Dale and Marie Hughes. They were both very knowledgeable about historical societies because they had both started one in Citrus County, Florida."

Mr. and Mrs. Hughes wrote that it was the intent of the Towns County Historical Society "to record and preserve the records of one of the most beautiful counties in the state of Georgia. These records begin with those early Appalachians who came to these mountains as the first white people, long before Georgia became a state.

"Their history, including that of the Native Americans they met here, plus the history of more modern times, is what Towns County Historical Society is dedicated to preserving.

"There is nothing that strengthens and solidifies a community like knowing its past."

The first year of the society only consisted of three public meetings, comprised of 10 people. Now, the society meets monthly with an average



The Towns County Historical Society is just one of the many local organizations with which Joan Crothers associates, and she spoke in the October monthly meeting to talk about the history of the historical society

attendance of 30 members, a large increase for such a short period of time.

"Jerry Taylor was our second president," said Crothers. "Because of his talks and other interesting programs, our membership grew even more. Then, Terry Lee Marshall was the next president, and her dream was to have a sesquicentennial on the lines of the 100-year centennial celebration.

"Working on this, along with all our other programs, took a lot of time and effort. Grants were looked for, dignitaries were contacted, and oh so many letters, emails, visits and phone calls."

With the sesquicentennial, the society held a film festival and tote bag design contest, pulling together the ranks of all community members to celebrate the county's 150th anniversary, held on Saturday, Sept. 16, 2006.

Through the years, the society has saved buildings, such as the Presley Post Office, and lost buildings. They have hosted Heritage Days, assisted in restorations and even made their way across Lake Chatuge,

to Cemetery Island, to clean up around the old graves.

While goals and aspirations may have changed from time to time, one of the society's dreams has always stayed alive. Since the start of the Historical Society, beginning with that first handful of individuals, it has been every member's dream to establish a museum of Towns County History.

Though some of the initial members have since passed on, the Historical Society is finally seeing that dream come to fruition with the Old Rock Jail, which the society is set to inherit after the New Year.

At the end of the meeting, all those in attendance surprised Crothers with a reception in her honor to thank her for all the many years, countless hours and thoughtful effort she has put toward helping not only the historical society, but the community as a whole.

"I've lived all over the country, but when I saw this place, I said, 'I love it, and this is where I'm going to stay,'" said Crothers. "I have enjoyed it so much. It's been wonderful."

Community continues support for Deputy Henderson



The Cove at Nottely Boat Club is just one of many local businesses that has gone above and beyond to assist the family of Union County Sheriff's Deputy Mitchell Henderson during his recovery

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Mitchell Henderson, who as of late has been in serious but stable condition, proved well enough to undergo pelvic surgery last week, and his family hopes he can transfer to Atlanta's Shepherd Center this week for further rehabilitation, according to UCSCO Lt. Daren Osborn.

Henderson, a deputy with the Union County Sheriff's Office and native of Young Harris, has been in Northeast Georgia Medical Center in Gainesville since his Sept. 19 car accident, with family staying nearby in hotels and friends from Union and Towns counties visiting regularly.

Shepherd Center is a rehabilitation hospital specializing in rehab for spinal cord and brain injuries.

During this healing time, many in the community have come together to show their support for Deputy Henderson and his family.

Just this past Saturday, The Cove at Nottely Boat

Club held a dedicated concert benefit for Deputy Henderson and his family – donations were collected instead of a cover charge, and all proceeds went to the Hendersons.

The Cove also held a Shake the Lake Challenge last week in order to raise even more money for the Hendersons, where individuals from the community were challenged to jump into the lake based on fundraising milestones.

Shake the Lake participants for Friday, Oct. 14, were: David Green of the Union County Road Department; Nichole Green of the Union County Community Center; Aundrea Owenby with Coosa Creek Embroidery; Wayne Jolly of Cabin Coffee; Pastor Scott Demers of Shooting Creek Church; Dennis Lynn of Inbound Solutions Group; and Brett Dobbins, Melanie Jones and Nathan South of The Cove at Nottely Boat Club.

Cove co-owner Jerz Mike has been in contact with the family, and even recorded the Shake the Lake Challenge and the Saturday night concert

so that the Hendersons could watch from the hospital.

"The message that the family wants to keep conveying is that they can't thank the community enough for everything that everyone's doing," said Jerz Mike.

Another event took place for Henderson this past Saturday, a motorcycle ride that headed out from McConnell Memorial Baptist Church in Hiawassee.

And folks will be wanting to mark their calendars for the #239 Turkey Trot, which is a 5K and prayer walk for Deputy Henderson.

The Turkey Trot takes place on Saturday, Nov. 19, at Meeks Park. Registration opens at 8 a.m., and pre-registering can be completed at active.com.

Registering costs \$25 if done at active.com, and a T-shirt will be included. Registering the day of the race will cost \$30, with T-shirts available as supplies last.

The run and walk begins at 9 a.m. that Saturday, Nov. 19.

Fairgrounds...from Page 1A

playing host to the first ever Appalachian Brew, Que and Stew Festival, which will be this Saturday, Oct. 22, from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Cost of admission is \$40 at the gate or \$35 for advanced pre-sale tickets, and that gets attendees access to 21 different craft breweries from both Georgia and North Carolina, such as Terrapin, New Belgium, Red Hare and Monday Night Brewing.

For entertainment, music will be themed live Appalachian and Americana, featuring acts Austin Coleman, Rob Tiger & Friends, Angela Easterling, The Paper Crowns, not to mention the first ever Brewfest Americana Jam hosted by Wyatt Espalin.

Regional arts and crafts vendors will also be in attendance for the Brew, Que and Stew Festival, as will several local food vendors.

"Tickets include a souvenir mug and unlimited tastings from the breweries," said Thomason. "You can taste as long as you want to taste – there will be somewhere between 40 to 50 different types of beer.

"We've got 12 to 15 artists that will be coming in with their arts and crafts. There will be plenty of food and shopping. And if you don't want to taste the beer, then of course we'll have soft drinks and water and all that good stuff for them.

"And we've got someone that's going to be cooking a whole hog down there. We've got Brunswick stew, smoked turkey, barbecue, boiled peanuts, nachos, hotdogs, hamburgers – we've got it all."

Thomason cooked up the idea for a beer festival because, it being the month of Oktober, she knew that the fairgrounds needed to try to compete with all of the beer festivals already going on in the mountains.

And the weather will be just right for those attending – a comfortable cool.

"We've got sweatshirts and hoodies and long-sleeve T's," said Thomason, who figures people will want to get in on the first annual memorabilia. "The barbeque and the Brunswick stew, it's going to be some great food, and a great venue to have it, so it'll be nice and comfortable out there, just listening to the music and having a good time. Be sure to come out and enjoy it, and see what we have to offer."

Thomason wants people to know that there



Pioneer Village is always one of the more popular attractions year after year at the Fall Festival, where mountain-living enthusiasts take part in bringing old traditions back to life.

are still a couple hundred tickets available for the Nov. 11 Jamey Johnson show in the Anderson Music Hall. And that Saturday, Nov. 12, Mark Lindsay – former lead singer of Paul Revere & The Raiders – will be in concert with The Swingin' Medallions and The Grass Roots.

Coming up this holiday season is the first year of the Mountain Country Christmas in Lights, which will run Thanksgiving Night through New Year's Day.

"We're going to be open Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday," said Thomason. "That will start at the highway with all the decorations, and come up through the parking shed and inside the fairgrounds, down through the craft area, up through Pioneer Village, down by the Exhibit Hall and the water wheel.

"We'll have all the displays set up, and all the buildings will be decorated.

We're trying to fill all the booths with businesses and civic organizations, artists, and churches – especially the churches. They're really getting in behind this and backing it, and giving us a lot of support."

Thomason added: "Anybody that's got any Christmas decorations that they want to donate, we'll be happy to take those to decorate some of the booths. We have a lot of people that are very interested in the booths, and there are still openings."

Tickets are on sale now for the Thanksgiving Gospel Sing, hosted by Chris Rumpf on Saturday, Nov. 26. And coming up, Lee Greenwood and Lorrie Morgan will put on a "patriotic country Christmas" with a special concert on Dec. 16.

For more information, visit georgiamountainfairgrounds.com.

Community comes together for 'Hope Against Heroin'

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Drug addiction is a disease, and as with any other disease, those suffering from the effects of drug addiction deserve treatment as well as respect.

And Joanne Sales wants everyone – especially "addicts" and their families – to know that, even if every next day seems dimmer than the last, there is hope against the growing darkness caused by drug addiction.

Sales, whom many will recognize from the Union County Historical Society, organized the well-attended "Hope Against Heroin Rally," which took place on Thursday, Oct. 13, and left the Haralson Memorial Civic Center with standing room only.

The event, attended by residents from around the region, focused on a collective message of hope delivered by people whose lives have been directly touched by drug abuse.

"This rally is to raise awareness of addiction in Union County," said Sales in introduction, before listing several goals for the event. "One is that it will open your hearts and minds to the urgency of facing addiction.

"Two, to encourage the people to look beyond the stigma and shame that addiction can and does impact the people they love the most. Three is to educate people that addiction is a disease, and that they need to be cared for just like cancer, diabetes and any other health concern."

Following her introduction, Sales, her featured speakers and fellow event organizers put on an emotional living slideshow set to music.

One by one, individuals stood before a captivated audience, posters held high. Each poster contained a personalized testimonial, such as, "My life is consumed with anger and



This mother participated in an emotional live slideshow of those whose lives have been impacted or nearly shattered by heroin and other drugs

resentment," and, "Faith, hope & love! Never give up!"

Speakers for the evening ranged from those who had experienced firsthand the crushing stages of drug addiction, the hope of recovery and ultimately the joys of living drug-free lives, to friends and family members who have looked on helplessly as loved ones deteriorated before their very eyes.

All who spoke did so bravely, defying the negative stigma associated with drug addiction, and instead attaching positive messages of hope and understanding that addiction doesn't have to live in the dark.

Ian Petkevich – one of the young men in whose memory the rally was dedicated – died of a drug overdose in June of 2015. Since then, his mother, Tonka Rennie, has become an advocate for the life-saving drug Naloxone, which can reverse the effects of a drug overdose within minutes of application.

Rennie is able to train others to use the drug, and she encourages both active drug users and the loved ones of active drug users to get their hands on one of the Naloxone kits.

"Naloxone is the drug that will bring your child or your loved one out of a heroin overdose," said Rennie, holding up a kit used to administer the drug. "If you find your loved one not breathing, in the process of

dying of an overdose, this drug will save their life. And I wish to God I'd had this drug when my son was an avid user."

Those looking for more information about the Naloxone kits can contact Rennie via Facebook or at tonkarennie@yahoo.com.

Sales made sure to invite as many of the local leaders and elected officials as possible in an effort to maximize the outreach potential of "Hope Against Heroin."

Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris, Union County Sheriff Mack Mason, Shawn Dyer with the Blairsville Police Department and Enotah Judicial Circuit District Attorney Jeff Langley all attended the rally.

Full Throttle Ministries cooked up some delicious barbecue for the event, and Bradley Grizzell provided live and pre-recorded musical accompaniment during the rally.

Debuting his Addicted Ministries, Cory Davis shared information about his new venture, and he led a small fellowship at the close of the meeting.

The North Enotah Drug Accountability Court held a graduation of five individuals who had recovered from drug addiction on the same day as the "Hope Against Heroin Rally."