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When it comes to fires, Towns County Fire knocks them dead

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Towns County Fire Chief Harold Copeland and his department have kept busy all year, responding to one emergency situation after another.

Reviewing the fire department's activity at the tail end of 2017 offers a good snapshot of just what Towns County firefighters must deal with on a regular basis.

"On Nov. 16, we were called out to a wildland fire on U.S. 75 South," said Chief Copeland. "The homeowner had started a brush pile at the base of a hill, and had gone in to do something in his house.

When he came back, the fire was out of control."

As a rule, people shouldn't start fires at the bases of hills, as fire tends to spread quickly up them.

"It got away and started racing toward the home," said Chief Copeland. "One of our first responders arrived on the scene and used a garden hose to start wetting the fuels around the house, and we stopped it probably 10 or 15 yards from the house.

"Tanker 1 responded and caught the head of the fire on the south flank. Rescue 5 responded and caught the north flank. Mop-up crews used our backpack blowers to secure the lines around the fire. No firemen were hurt, and no

property was destroyed."

Four days later, on Nov. 20, the department responded to a structure fire on King Cove Road.

"It was called in approximately 5:30 in the morning," said Chief Copeland. "Engine 1, Tanker 1 and Warne, North Carolina, responded. That fire was stopped at the area of origin. It was around the woodstove insert.

"Crews were able to get in and make a quick interior attack. Even though it got up into the roof, we were able to knock it down and save their photos and belongings, so it was an excellent job there."

And just three days after the King Cove Road See *Fire, Page 5A*



Towns County Fire Engine 1, Tanker 1 and Warne, North Carolina, line the driveway of a home on King Cove Road.

EMC directors talk Winter Storm Benji in board meeting

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

The *North Georgia News* and *Towns County Herald* would like to thank the employees of the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC for their hard work and dedication during Winter Storm Benji.

These employees worked long hours in terrible weather conditions over the Dec. 8 weekend to more than 20,000 homes throughout the five member counties of the EMC.

In turn, EMC General Manager Jeremy Nelms and the EMC Board of Directors would like to thank the road departments of Towns and

Union counties for keeping the roads clear, as well as local businesses in both counties for providing food and other supplies to line workers.

Nelms and the directors discussed Benji in their Dec. 12 regular board meeting, and though member attendance was down from last month, EMC Board President Mickey Cummings said the transition to meetings attended by the membership has been going well.

"We're learning as we go," said Cummings. "We want to be as transparent as possible. We want our members to come."

The board voted in October to open its monthly meetings to members in good

standing, and the first regular board meeting opened to the membership occurred on Nov. 16.

Moving forward, all regular board meetings will be open to members who follow the member attendance policy.

The policy calls for members who plan to attend to fill out an attendance form at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting.

This form can be found by navigating to BRMEMC.com, hovering over the "About Us" section at the top of the page, and selecting "Board Meetings" from the menu.

Under the "Board Meetings" section of the See *BRMEMC, Page 5A*



BRMEMC General Manager Jeremy Nelms, Director Danny Henson and Board President Mickey Cummings. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

Fairgrounds invites residents for free viewing of lights

By Lily Avery
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Georgia Mountain Fairground's Mountain Country Christmas has hosted a night of free admission for all Towns County residents to enjoy the beauty and holiday cheer of the light show on Thursday, Dec. 14.

This is the second year that the Fairgrounds made the decision to give back to the people of Towns County during the yuletide season by offering free admission to the holiday light show, with the first year being a joint idea between Fairgrounds General Manager Hilda Thomason and former Towns County Sole



Lynn Buck of WoodmenLife handing out free chocolate chip cookies and plenty of Merry Christmases at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds Mountain Country Christmas. Photo/Lily Avery

See *Fairgrounds, Page 5A*

Historical Society holds Christmas party for members

By Lily Avery
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Each year, the Towns County Historical Society hosts a special Christmas program during the month of December to spread holiday cheer throughout the community and celebrate the yuletide season with its members.

During last week's monthly meeting, the society did just that, pulling out all the bells and whistles for the annual Christmas party on Monday, Dec. 11.

Hosted by society members Nancy Cody, Annette Cook and Jerry Taylor, the event was an evening to remember with plenty of singing, laughter, presents and good festive fun and fellowship.

Taylor began the evening by inviting the more than 30 guests present to join in song as he played popular Christmas tunes on the reed organ.

"Music is Christmas," said Taylor. "I remember as a child growing up here in the tri-state area listening to the radio where, this time of year,



Towns County Historical Society president Sandra Green opening a giant birdhouse at the December meeting. Photo/Lily Avery

they started playing Christmas music. And I absolutely loved it.

"So, in the spirit of that, we're going to join in with about half a dozen Christmas carols. I'll be playing on a 1912 Reed Organ."

In true Christmas spirit, everyone joined together to sing, "Deck the Halls," "Up on the Housetop," "Jingle Bells," "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer," "Beautiful Star of Bethlehem" and "We Wish You a Merry Christmas."

And no Christmas party would be complete without a

good-humored game of present swapping, which is why Cody and Cook thought the Dirty Santa game was the perfect fit for the society's annual event.

"We're going to have some fun," said Cook. "This is kind of going along with the 12 days of Christmas. We're going to be doing a little game of Dirty Santa or whatever you want to call it.

"The part that makes it so much fun is that a ticket is going to be drawn, then the person who has the matching

See *Historical Society, Page 5A*

Leon James home from hospital, recovering from injuries

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Leon James of Towns County is home from the hospital.

The Union County Sheriff's lieutenant returned home from Northeast Georgia Medical Center the evening of Wednesday, Dec. 13.

He entered the hospital on Sunday, Dec. 10, following a serious single-car crash in which he sustained six broken ribs and two stable spinal fractures.

Since his accident, there has been a tremendous outpouring of support and prayers for James on social media.

See *James, Page 5A*



L-R, from the Union County Sheriff's Office: Capt. Doug Loyd, Lt. Leon James, Sheriff Mack Mason and Chief Deputy John George. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

BOE and school system get ready for Christmas break

By Lily Avery
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

The Towns County Board of Education took care of some house keeping before the upcoming holiday break, such as school admission policy revisions, during the board's monthly meeting on Monday, Dec. 11.

Previously, the school had a policy that required a student to have a parent or legal guardian present and available to sign paperwork

See *BOE, Page 5A*



Towns County Board of Education Members Laura Banister and Dr. Kilee Smith. Photo/Lily Avery

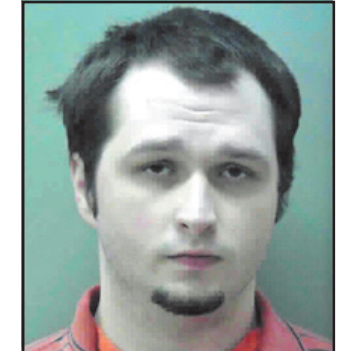
TCSO arrests Bald Mountain Park burglar a second time

News Special to
Towns County Herald

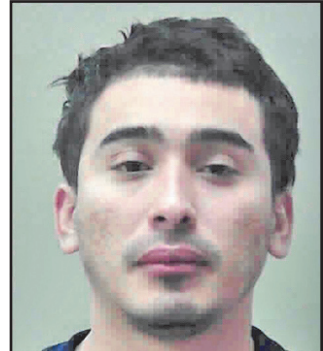
On Thursday, Dec. 14, Towns County Sheriff's deputies arrested Austin James Shook, charging him with one count of burglary first degree, one count of burglary second degree, and one count of possession of burglary tools.

Shook was out on bond at the time for previous charges

See *Burglar, Page 5A*



Austin James Shook



Darwin Pena Diaz

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Basketball
Dec. 19 vs. SE Whitfield 6 PM
Battle of the States
@Towns Co.
Dec. 27th-29th

Merry Christmas

From the staff of the Towns County Herald and West Printing Company

The Towns County Herald office will be closed December 22nd and December 25th