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Commissioner-elect speaks on future of the county

By Lily Avery
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

YOUNG HARRIS — Towns County Sole Commissioner-elect Cliff Bradshaw spoke to residents about his plans for the county at the weekly meeting of the Mountain Movers and Shakers at Mary's Southern Grill on Friday, Dec. 16.

"Now, we're definitely working everyday and we're ready to go to work for you," said Bradshaw. "We appreciate all of your support. I want to thank y'all for everything you have done for me. We definitely want to talk to you and work with you, each and every day, whatever it takes.

"My door will be open, my phone will be on, and we'll be ready to go."

Bradshaw began by explaining the extensive training he has been receiving

and will continue to receive throughout the coming months in preparation for assuming his role as commissioner in January.

"I have received one week of training at the University of Georgia for commissioner," said Bradshaw. "We have eight more weeks of training to complete, and we have 18 months to do that. I'm going to take every class that is available, even if it's over and beyond what is required. We're going to get educated and learn everything we can."

In addition to the classes at UGA, Bradshaw has spent the last several weeks working with outgoing Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall to learn the ins and outs of the office as well as ready the staff for a smooth transition.

According to Bradshaw, he has met with department heads throughout the county



Towns County Sole Commissioner-Elect Cliff Bradshaw at the Dec. 16 meeting of the Mountain Movers and Shakers

to begin building a working relationship and establish the working environment he hopes to cultivate during his term.

"Mr. Kendall has done a great job, but I'm not Mr.

Kendall," said Bradshaw. "We have different views on certain things and see things a little differently.

"I've met with the heads in the county and the

employees, and talked to them and explained what we expect as a boss. In other words, we're holding them accountable and responsible and we set our standards high. I think that's what the taxpayers expect."

Also, Bradshaw shared his desire to pursue a possible joint SPLOST collection for the county and school system sometime down the road.

Earlier this year, voters approved a referendum to give Towns County Schools an extra penny in sales tax, effectively increasing the sales tax countywide to 8 cents on the dollar. This sales tax rate of 8 percent will last several more months until the county's SPLOST runs out in the summer of 2017, at which point the sales tax will revert to 7 percent.

Towns County Schools Superintendent Dr. Darren Berrong and the board of education expressed previously

that the schools will only collect enough tax to accomplish their SPLOST goals, meaning that of the five years they can collect the tax, they intend to stop collection after four years.

"I've been working with Dr. Berrong," said Bradshaw. "When the E-SPLOST tax runs out, we want to put it in again. We'll stay at 7 percent sales tax when the school's goes out — we'll stay at 7 percent. What we want is the law to change so the county and the schools can share in that tax. We're going to meet with Sen. John Wilkinson and get this thing going, because it's very, very important."

Bradshaw went on to address a situation that has caused tension between the county and the City of Young Harris, the requested variance for a private developer to build

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Historical society honors Commissioner Kendall

By Lily Avery
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Towns County Historical Society members spent an evening honoring their commissioner, Bill Kendall, during their monthly meeting on Monday, Dec. 12.

In that meeting, they thanked him for his devotion to preserving the history of the county, and for the endless support he has given to the historical society.

Throughout his time in office, Commissioner Kendall has continued to display his love for the history of Towns County through efforts to perpetuate the work of the historical society.

Two such projects that have demonstrated this devotion are the Bell Mountain County Park, as well as the recent



Sandra Green, president of the Towns County Historical Society, presented Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall with a painting of Bell Mountain County Park in the Monday, Dec. 12, meeting.

entrustment of the Old Rock Jail and Presley Post Office to the care of the society, for its members to renovate and use

as a county museum.

On behalf of all members of the society, Historical Society

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Program provides Christmas for foster children

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Imagine spending Christmas without family — that's what it's like being a foster child on Christmas Day.

Thankfully, the Towns and Union Foster Children's Enrichment Program has been hard at work gathering donations made by generous individuals to provide rewarding and positive Christmas experiences for children who are currently caught in the legal system.

The program, a nonprofit entity, is carried out by former and current CASA volunteers — that's Court Appointed Special Advocates for children.

Because the identities of children in foster care are kept secret for their own protection, people who decide to sponsor



Pat Elliott and Richard Paolillo were two of the founders of the enrichment program

a foster child never know the name of the kid they are helping.

On the other hand, the child gets to fill out their very

own wish list to be used by a sponsor for shopping, so it's almost as if each sponsor is Santa Claus for a special child

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Gibby, Hedden say goodbye to BOE

By Lily Avery
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

The Towns County Board of Education paid tribute to longtime board members Bob Gibby and Donna Hedden during the regular monthly meeting in the Anne Oliver Mitchell Auditorium on Monday, Dec. 12.

Both Gibby and Hedden will be leaving the board at the end of this month, after serving the limited three consecutive terms possible as established by the Towns County School System.

Gibby has served on the board of education for a total of 16 nonconsecutive years, and Hedden just finished her third four-year term on the board, making for a total of 12 consecutive years.

On behalf of the board, Towns County Schools Superintendent Dr. Darren Berrong presented the retiring board members plaques in honor of their dedication, love and service to the children of the county.

"There are a lot of jobs in the world that are thankless positions," said Dr. Berrong. "I'd have to say that being a board member is probably one of the most thankless jobs or political offices that you can possibly hold.

"The only reason that anyone would even want to do this to begin with, is because they have the education of the students of this county in mind and want to put in those years of service.

"I can't think of two people in this county that care more for our students and care more about the decisions that we make that affect our students, than these two individuals. I appreciate everything that you guys have done over the years that y'all



Bob Gibby was given a plaque of appreciation for having served a total of 16 years on the Towns County Board of Education. The December meeting was his last regular meeting.



Donna Hedden got hugs and flowers from the principals of Towns County Schools. December was Hedden's last regular meeting

have been here." Gibby and Hedden each also received a beautiful bouquet of poinsettias as tokens of appreciation from Elementary School Principal Dr. Sandy Page, Middle School Principal Erica Chastain and High School Principal Dr. Connie Hobbs.

"We just can't say enough about these two people," said Dr. Hobbs. "I've only been in administration for a short term, but I couldn't ask for any two more supportive people. They

are always there to provide support, say positive things, and try to get you anything or do anything they can for you."

Laura Banister and Dr. Kilee Smith won their elections to the school board this year, and they will fill the seats vacated by Gibby and Hedden come the January board meeting.

Also during the meeting, TCES robotics team First Lego League made an appearance, presenting to Dr. Berrong and the board the team's latest prize-

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'Adopt-a-Grandparent' remembers the elderly for Christmas

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

For the fourth year running, Roberta Ford and Kristy Wallace assembled their helper elves to hold the annual Adopt-a-Grandparent for Christmas in Union and Towns counties, this year on Friday, Dec. 16.

Ford and Wallace, both Independent Beauty Consultants with Mary Kay, started the program in 2013 with the Union County Nursing Home. They expanded their reach the following year, in 2014, by adopting the grandparents of Chatuge Regional Nursing Home.

Last year, the two, in what they call their "Joy Team," were able to add residents of



Alicia Rogers, Roberta Ford, Kristy Wallace and David Vogel at Chatuge Regional Nursing Home on Friday, Dec. 16

the Lazy-R Personal Care Center as beneficiaries of their program, and they got help from friends and clients Erika Star and Brigitte Edghill.

Ford, Wallace and Hill delivered gifts to each resident, and they did so dressed in festive attire and ringing jingle

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Shop With A Hero receives donation from area business

By Lily Avery
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

BLAIRSVILLE — Last year, when the Corridor Mortgage Group of Blairsville handed a check to Hiwassee Police Chief Jimmy Wright in early December, he was proud to accept the donation on behalf of needy children in his city and county.

Tragically, Wright died about a week after taking that donation, which threatened to cast a long shadow over last year's Shop With A Cop.

The event went well, however, as law enforcement and first responders from both Towns and Union counties rallied with Wright's children, Jared and Brittany, to make sure that the kids chosen



The children of beloved Hiwassee Police Chief Jimmy Wright, who passed away last December, accepted a donation on their dad's behalf for Shop With A Hero. Corridor Mortgage Group of Blairsville made the donation.

to participate in that year's Christmas morning that they

deserved. And Corridor Mortgage has once again made two

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The offices of Towns County Herald and West Printing Company will be closed on Friday, December 23rd.