

# Towns County Herald

Legal Organ of Towns County

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Publication Number 635540 Volume 89 Number 09

Wednesday, January 3, 2018

## A Year in Review: Remembering the Top 5 stories of 2017

By Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
Assistant Editor

No one can say that 2017 was not a year to remember.

After all, it was the year that saw Donald J. Trump sworn in to his first term as President of the United States of America.

In other national headlines, everyone was glad to see Charles Manson go, yet sad to learn that Tom Petty had run down his final dream.

And there were plenty of headlines closer to home, as Towns County experienced some big stories of its own in 2017.

Weather presented much to worry about in 2017, with

significant storms moving through at different times of the year causing more than one bread shortage.

January 2017 kicked off with Winter Storm Helena, which dropped more than six inches of snow before heading out of town. Winter Storm Benji doubled that amount in December 2017, and kids got to miss school as a result of both storms.

Tropical Storm Irma – at one point a Category 5 hurricane – made its way swiftly through the mountains in September 2017, causing significant damage to Blue Ridge Mountain EMC lines, poles and other infrastructure. Not quite a weather event

but the natural phenomenon, the Aug. 21 Total Solar Eclipse brought a breathtaking experience to Towns and neighboring counties.

Thousands of people flocked to the area to view the rare eclipse, many of them to the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds, and Towns County was lucky enough to have one of the longest viewing times within the Path of Totality at greater than two and a half minutes.

The Fairgrounds also hosted a multitude of big name musical acts in 2017, including Hank Williams Jr., ZZ Top, the Beach Boys, Wynonna Judd, Martina McBride, T. Graham Brown and others, not to mention the ever-popular

annual events, the Georgia Mountain Fair and the Fall Festival.

In April, the Georgia Department of Transportation asked Towns and Union County residents for feedback on its plans to widen and relocate much of Georgia 515 over the 8.5-mile stretch between Blairsville and Young Harris.

During a public information open house, GDOT shared its design drawings, which took into account more than 200 land parcels that would need to be purchased for the four-lane right of way.

GDOT announced its  
See 2017 Review, Page 8A



A cardinal in Hiawassee snow – as is often the case, snow booked 2017, with Winter Storm Helena hitting in January and Winter Storm Benji coming in December. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

## Ordiales saves city thousands of dollars with loan payoff

By Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
Assistant Editor

For nearly half of 2017, now-Liz Ordiales ran the City of Hiawassee as mayor pro tem following the retirement of longtime mayor Barbara Mathis.

Due to a poorly worded section of the Hiawassee City Charter concerning mayor pro tem compensation, Ordiales was not paid for her time – she was effectively standing in as a full-time volunteer mayor.

When Ordiales resigned from her council post to run for mayor last August, Hiawassee City Councilmembers Kris Berrong and Anne Mitchell took turns volunteering in the pro tem position, Mitchell



Hiawassee Mayor Liz Ordiales notably for the last four months of the year. She was sworn in as Hiawassee mayor on Jan.

2, 2018, but immediately following her election and certification as the official Hiawassee mayor-elect in early November 2017, Ordiales resumed her volunteerism alongside Mitchell at City Hall.

The mayor-elect picked up right where she left off earlier last year, looking for ways to improve and bolster the city for all residents. Right away, Ordiales figured out how to save the city tens of thousands of dollars in the coming years and boost the city's financial prospects.

Ordiales took a meeting with the city auditors in December, asking them to walk her through Hiawassee's

See Ordiales, Page 5A

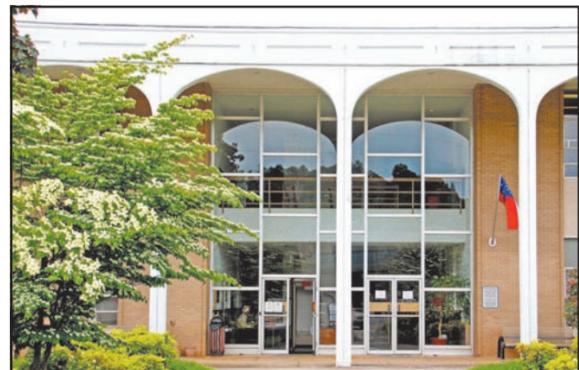
## Reminder to businesses: the sales tax is 7 cents on the dollar

By Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
Assistant Editor

Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw would like to extend a friendly reminder to local businesses that the sales tax in Towns County has been 7 cents on the dollar since July 1, 2017.

It appears that some businesses are still collecting the previous sales tax rate of 8 percent – small yet unexpected deposits from the state have continued into the county's old SPLOST account, despite the SPLOST having expired last summer.

Currently, the commissioner's office is sorting out what to do with the



The Towns County Courthouse

money. The county can't spend it because the SPLOST has expired, and the commissioner and his staff don't know who is still collecting the extra sales

tax, since the money is coming in as lump deposits from the state.

As previously reported, See Sales Tax, Page 5A

## Jarrard named assistant editor of Towns, Union papers

By Charles Duncan  
Towns County Herald  
Editor

Towns County Herald and North Georgia News Publisher Kenneth Duncan are pleased to announce the promotion of staff writer Shawn Jarrard to assistant editor.

Jarrard, 33, a native of Gainesville, has worked for the newspapers since August 2014, and has written more than 1,500 news articles in that time.

He is a graduate of the University of Georgia, where he earned two bachelor's degrees, one in English, the other in journalism with an emphasis in newspapers.

"Shawn is a dedicated, hard worker," West said.



Shawn Jarrard Assistant Editor of the Towns County Herald and North Georgia News

"Giving this young man some responsibilities was really a no-brainer. We're fortunate to have him." See Jarrard, Page 5A

## Coach John Cornett, Indians receive Region 8A honors

By Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
Assistant Editor

The Towns County Herald would like to congratulate Indians' Head Football Coach John Cornett and 12 of his players for achieving Region 8A honors for their 2017 football season.

Cornett has been selected Co-Coach of the Year by the other coaches in Region 8A, and he shares the title with Athens Academy Head Coach Josh Alexander.

At the end of each season, the coaches in the region gather to choose a coach of the year from among themselves, and it usually goes to the region winner.

This year, the coaches felt like the Athens Academy coach deserved the title for having won the region and for being a state contender,



TCHS Indian senior Harold Cox, Indian Head Coach John Cornett, and Indian senior Andy Chambers. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

but they also felt like Coach Cornett had earned the title for having had such a terrific season and making the state playoffs.

The compromise? They settled on the co-coach designation. "It's an honor that they consider me a good coach,"

said Coach Cornett, who also teaches math at Towns County High. "I've never been a head football coach before. Towns See Indians, Page 8A

## National video shoot coming to Hiawassee; casting call Jan. 6

News Special  
Towns County Herald

Do you want to appear in a locally-filmed Christian music video?

iSOUND Music will be holding a casting call on Saturday, Jan. 6, from 10 a.m. until noon at Ministries of Grace Church in Hiawassee.

The public is encouraged and invited to participate as extras in the video filming.

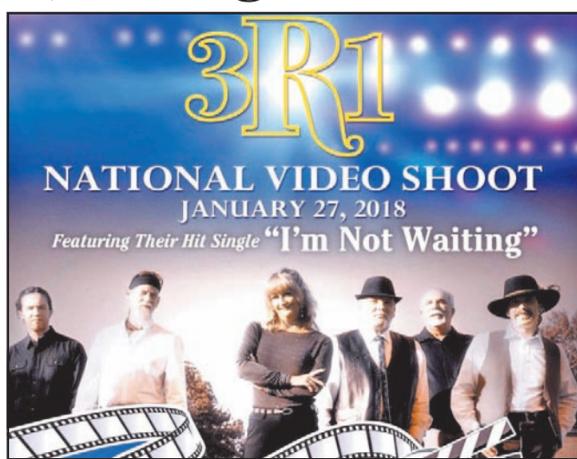
With offices in Atlanta and Los Angeles, iSOUND Music will be bringing a full film production crew to create a music video featuring local band 3R1.

The band is a Christian Rock group established in 1999 out of the Ministries of Grace Church in Hiawassee.

Video filming will take place on Saturday, Jan. 27, at the church location.

"I'm Not Waiting" is the band's hit single from their upcoming album, "A New Beginning."

The band has produced seven previous albums as independent artists, and this is their first project associated with



Local Christian Rock group 3R1 is looking for music video extras.

iSOUND Music.

The EP album will be available for download and CD purchase in early January.

Once the music video is completed, it will be sent to the major Christian and local television stations for review and possible TV airplay.

iSOUND Music is looking

for extras of all ages with energy and excitement.

Filming times and information will be handed out during the casting call.

For more information, visit the band's website at www.3R1.ROCKS, email the band at info@3R1.ROCKS, or call (706) 970-9058.

## 2018 county budget remains largely the same as 2017

By Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
Assistant Editor

Towns County's Fiscal Year 2018 Tentative Budget balances to \$9.5 million, and remains largely unchanged from the FY17 budget.

Expenditures are up slightly from the 2017 budget by about \$63,000, though revenues are up as well and cover the difference.

Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw adopted the 2018 tentative budget in a called meeting on Friday, Dec. 29, inside the Towns County Courthouse.

Also in the Dec. 29 meeting, Bradshaw finalized the 2017 county budget, which featured a few departmental fund reallocations from the 2017 tentative budget while retaining the same bottom line.

A budget is considered tentative until it is finalized at the end of each fiscal year, which runs Jan. 1 through



Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw, left, was joined by Towns County Sheriff Chris Clinton and Towns County Superior Court Clerk Cecil Dye in the Dec. 22 public hearing at the Towns County Courthouse. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

Dec. 31 for the county.

Bradshaw held a public hearing to discuss details of the 2018 tentative budget on Dec. 22.

"The budget is pretty

much like it was last year," said Bradshaw. "We kind of just went from last year's budget. We've had to increase the budget a little bit. We've

See Budget, Page 5A

2 Sections	16 Pages	Arrests	2A
Lake Levels		Church	2B
Blue Ridge	1,667.49	Classifieds	7B
Chatuge	1,917.43	Opinion	4A
Nottely	1,760.37	Legals	7B
		Obits	3B
		Sports	4B

Barcode: 0487919315

**Basketball**  
Jan 5 @ Commerce 6 PM  
Jan 6 vs. Athens Acad. 6 PM

**Electronic Recycling Available at the Transfer Station**  
See page 1B

**Mac Arnold Main Stage Concert Series at the Peacock Performing Arts Center**  
See page 3A

**FREE GED Classes Old Recreation Center Jan 2nd and 4th 4-8 PM**  
See page 3A