

Clinton...from Page 1A

exhibit leadership in other capacities, such as his position as Vice Chairman of the Appalachian Regional Drug Enforcement Office, which has afforded Towns County greater resources in fighting regionally connected drug crime.

His willingness to step up to the challenge and fill leadership gaps in other areas of law enforcement has earned him a distinct reputation among fellow lawmen.

Terry Norris, who serves as executive director of the Georgia Sheriffs' Association, has known Clinton for years and can attest to his abilities.

The two men work together regularly, as Clinton has assumed a variety of roles within the association, including chaplain, GSA executive board member, and multi-term Region III Vice President.

"He is very protective of his citizens up there, he represents them well," said Norris of Sheriff Clinton. "The sheriff's responsibilities don't stop with the law enforcement side and the courts side and the jail side.

"The public often calls sheriffs for matters that really have nothing to do with the sheriff's office. When they call the sheriff, and Chris Clinton is no different, he's going to call whoever he needs to call to try to get those folks help."

Continued Norris: "He has represented his folks well and takes care of them the best he can."

GSA Past President Scott Berry has been sheriff of Oconee County for 26 years, and he was surprised to learn that his friend has only been Towns County Sheriff for just over 10 years.

"I thought it was a lot longer," said Berry. "Chris is a great leader. He represents



Sheriff Clinton with his family on the day he was first sworn in to office on Dec. 14, 2007.



Photo/Shawn Jarrard
Johnny Van Zant endorsing Sheriff Clinton when Lynyrd Skynyrd played Anderson Music Hall in 2016.

Towns County well, he represents sheriffs well, and he represents the state well. I have all the faith in the world in him ... I'm proud to serve with Sheriff Clinton.

For more information

on Sheriff Clinton and the Towns County Sheriff's Office, including access to the local Sex Offender Registry, visit the sheriff's website at TownsSheriff.com.

Health...from Page 1A

The current flu vaccination, while still preventative, is not the best match for the H3N2 strain.

"It should be noted that these deaths are not necessarily caused by the flu, but these patients who died were suffering from the flu," said Dr. Logan.

"It is becoming widespread throughout the country and Georgia as well.

"We need to continue to encourage residents to get flu shots, even this late in the season. It's important to stay vaccinated against the virus, as it does decrease the likelihood of contracting it."

Flu vaccinations are still available at the Towns County Health Department.

As part of her Public Health 101 presentation, Dr. Logan presented to the board the "Talk With Me Baby" campaign of Georgia Gov. Nathan Deal, which aims to improve childhood literacy.

With this new initiative, Gov. Deal hopes to have all children in the state on path to reading proficiency by the third grade, with a 2020 goal in mind.

Based on data pulled from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, 34 percent of Georgia's third-grade students are reading proficiently, while 66 percent are not.

And though this does not seem like the best percentage, Georgia is on par with the majority of the country, with only a handful of states at higher than 40 percent reading proficiency by third grade.

"This is not just a Georgia problem," said Dr. Logan. "This is a national problem. And the primary concern here, aside from wanting our students to be well-educated and succeed,



Photo/Lily Avery
Towns County Schools Superintendent Dr. Darren Berrong is the chairman of the Towns County Board of Health.

is that studies have shown that students who are not reading proficient in the third grade are four times more likely to drop out of high school than proficient readers. That's where the concern is."

As for Towns County, third-grade reading proficiency has decreased from 26.6 percent in 2015 to 24.6 percent in 2016, though Towns County Schools Superintendent Dr. Darren Berrong, who chairs the Board of Health, said that recent CCRPI scores show students to be on the right track.

"We have some of the highest reading and language arts scores, from elementary through high school," said Dr. Berrong. "We're way above the Georgia average. So, this information is almost contradictory to what we see from our test scores. And as far as graduation rates, we're always in that low 90 percent."

With numbers that are not as high as desired, the "Talk With Me Baby" campaign will focus on providing positive,

language-rich adult interactions for children through the Get Georgia Reading initiative, and by training Health Department personnel to implement and share language nutrition to incoming patients.

"If you give a child lots of engagement, speak with them and use a lot of language, they are going to be more successful readers as they mature," said Dr. Logan. "More successful readers statistically are more successful members of society. So, we want to make sure that we're sharing this information with parents when they come to us.

"If we want to increase our reading proficiency, we need to be proactive, and everyone across the district needs to be on board. This is a positive campaign that will do a lot of good for our community, so I look forward to seeing our progress along the way."

To learn more about the "Talk With Me Baby" campaign, visit www.talkwithmebaby.org.

Indictments...from Page 1A

imprisonment; battery, Family Violence; two counts cruelty to children in the third degree.

Kelly Leeann Berry, possession of methamphetamine; possession of drug-related objects.

Steven Clint Berry, possession of methamphetamine; possession of drug-related objects; driving while license suspended; tag light violation; two counts recidivist; unlawful acts of violence in a penal institution; two counts simple battery.

Jason Chadwick Jones, possession of methamphetamine, possession of drug-related objects.

Anna Elizabeth Ingram, theft by taking.

Kenneth Fredrick Henderson, aggravated assault; battery.

Chelsea Kay Alferink, armed robbery; making a false statement.

Daniel Lee Walls, armed robbery.

Jessica Rae Chastain, making a false statement.

Justin Matthew Collins, one count theft by taking (felony); six counts theft by taking (misdemeanor).

Mark Woodrow Green,

forgery in the first degree; criminal attempt to commit a felony; forgery in the second degree.

Joshua Leon Brinson, theft by receiving property stolen in another state.

Robert Curtis Parker, theft by receiving property stolen in another state; theft by bringing stolen property into state.

Lisa Marie Triplett, AKA Lisa Marie Manis, AKA Lisa Marie Lunsford, theft by receiving property stolen in another state; theft by bringing stolen property into state.

Elijah Seth Thomason, burglary in the second degree; criminal attempt to commit a felony.

Austin James Shook, Arson in the first degree; three counts burglary in the first degree; burglary in the second degree; two counts possession of tools for the commission of crime.

Zachary William Hart, financial transaction card theft; two counts financial transaction card fraud.

Terry William Henderson, financial transaction card theft; two counts financial transaction card fraud.

Paul M Hudson, deposit

account fraud.

Ashlee Nicole Bauer, two counts possession of a controlled substance; possession of marijuana less than an ounce; driving without a license; possession of drug-related objects.

Benjamin Robert Obst, burglary in the first degree; theft by taking; financial transaction card theft.

Jonathan Caleb Hart, burglary in the first degree; burglary in the second degree; theft by taking; two counts theft by receiving stolen property; possession of methamphetamine; possession of tools for the commission of crime.

Kristy Lynn McGaha, burglary in the first degree; possession of methamphetamine; possession of tools for the commission of crime.

Zackery Eugene Patterson, burglary in the first degree; theft by receiving stolen property; criminal attempt to commit a felony; two counts possession of tools for the commission of crime.

Ashley Lauren Patterson, two counts making a false statement.

Tiffany Ann Lance, battery, Family Violence; battery; two counts cruelty to children in the third degree.

Hiawassee...from Page 1A

determined that many hydrants within city limits either needed repairs or were altogether inoperable.

"We've replaced and fixed every hydrant we could," said Ordiales. "The ones that are left are 1964 hydrants.

"It's hard to find parts for 50-year-old hydrants. So, we're trying different things to see if we can make a part from a newer hydrant fit these older hydrants. If not, we're just going to have to replace those, too. We're down to seven that need to be replaced.

"Each hydrant is \$3,500, and the majority of the hydrants that we have are 1964 hydrants. So, as they break, we're hoping that we'll be able to replace them totally."

Also during the meeting, Hiawassee Police Chief Paul Smith shared several items of interest with those gathered.

Each year, the Hiawassee Police Department raises money for the Shop With A Hero for Christmas event, which allows children of the community to shop at Walmart for Christmas presents.

The kids pair off with a police officer or other public safety chaperone to shop, oftentimes picking out gifts for members of their families before themselves.

According to Smith, this past year was one of the best experiences to date.

"I want to thank all of you again for the generous donations for our Shop With A Hero program," said Smith. "We ended up taking 27 children Christmas shopping. "They each got \$200 to



Hiawassee Police Chief Paul Smith

spend and then a pizza party afterwards. They all had a wonderful time, and we're really grateful to be able to do this for them."

Smith continued to give a general overview of 2017, highlighting the many drug arrests – more than a hundred – that the department made as a result of traffic stops over the last year.

"2017 was a very busy year for us," said Smith. "We had roughly 217 arrests in our two-mile stretch of road here, and 107 of those arrests were drug related.

"Out of those 107, roughly 65 of them were felony drugs. So, that includes meth, cocaine, heroin and prescription drugs. These are all things that we've encountered over the last year."

According to Smith,

and staying home if sick. Of course, getting the flu shot is the first step in preventing flu and complications from the illness.

"Flu symptoms occur rapidly with cough, sore throat, runny nose, fever, and body aches the most common. Adults generally don't experience vomiting or diarrhea, but children might.

"Some symptoms can mean your illness is severe, such as: trouble breathing, pain or pressure in the chest or belly, sudden dizziness or confusion, or severe vomiting. If an individual experiences these symptoms, they should seek immediate medical attention."

For vulnerable segments of the population, vaccination could mean the difference between life and death.

Already, dozens of young children across the U.S. have died this flu season from flu-related illnesses, and although a flu shot is not guaranteed to keep people from catching a variant strain of the virus, it's still the best hope for many Americans.

"In 2017, a study in Pediatrics was the first of its kind to show that flu vaccination also significantly reduced a child's risk of dying from influenza," per the CDC.

"The more people who get vaccinated, the more people will be protected from flu, including older people, very young children, pregnant

these arrests were primary residents of the tri-county area, as well as neighboring Clay County, North Carolina.

Smith hopes to continue this type of enforcement to tackle ongoing drug-related problems throughout the city.

"We did over 1,500 traffic stops last year, but we didn't give tickets at every one," said Smith. "All of those drug arrests are coming from those traffic stops.

"So, we want to continue to be proactive and stay on top of it so we can continue to provide the safest Hiawassee possible."

This week at the Mountain Movers and Shakers, North Georgia Technical College Vice President of Economic Development Carol Jackson will be speaking at 8 a.m. at Sundance Grill.

Flu...from Page 1A

something to be taken lightly – each year, as many as 36,000 people die from influenza-related illnesses in the U.S., per the CDC.

Of course, the best way to prevent the illness is to get the shot, and no, it's not too late.

"If a person has not had the flu shot, they should get it now," said Palmer. "There is still vaccine available at our health departments, local pharmacies and doctor's offices. The flu shot can help prevent or reduce the effects of flu depending on how well a person's immune system reacts to the vaccine."

Continued Palmer: "The flu shot is recommended for everyone 6 months of age and older. Children, people 65 and older, pregnant women, and individuals with chronic health conditions are at higher risk for complications from flu and should be vaccinated."

And while the flu is definitely a cause for concern, folks would be better served spending less time worrying and more time concentrating on prevention.

"People should be aware that influenza can cause serious complications in some people," said Palmer. "Therefore, everyone should practice good hygiene such as washing their hands often, covering coughs and sneezes,

women, and people with certain long-term health conditions who are more vulnerable to serious flu complications."

Those who have the flu can spread it to others up to six feet away, and according to the CDC, most experts think that the flu virus is spread mainly by droplets made when people sick with the flu cough, sneeze or talk.

"These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs," per CDC.gov. "Less often, a person might also get flu by touching a surface or object that has flu virus on it and then touching their own mouth or nose.

"To avoid this, people should stay away from sick people and stay home if sick. It also is important to wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub."

Continued the CDC: "Linens, eating utensils, and dishes belonging to those who are sick should not be shared without washing thoroughly first. Eating utensils can be washed either in a dishwasher or by hand with water and soap and do not need to be cleaned separately.

"Further, frequently touched surfaces should be cleaned and disinfected at home, work and school, especially if someone is ill."

Cochran is offering this Flag Retirement Program at all five of its locations, and at no cost to families of veterans.

"By ensuring that time-worn flags are disposed of properly and that no veteran in our care is cremated without a red, white and blue tribute, Cochran Funeral Homes & Crematory honors the two most treasured symbols of American pride: Veterans and the Flag of the United States of America," according to Cochran.

Residents looking to donate well-flown flags for the retirement program can drop them off at any Cochran Funeral Home.

Furthermore, the American Legion Ira Weaver Post 121 has a patriotically repurposed U.S. mailbox acting as a flag receptacle posted outside the main entrance of the Union County Courthouse.

"One of the basic tenets of the American Legion is helping out other veterans, and that's the last thing you can do for them," said Post 121 Adjutant Jack Waters of the program.

For more information on the American Legion Ira Weaver Post, visit LegionPost121.org.

Legion...from Page 1A

funeral service and is usually presented to next of kin after burial.

A veteran who is cremated may still receive a burial flag, but that flag never covers him or her in death. Instead, the flag accompanies the veteran's urn and is usually presented to next of kin after inurnment.

Cochran Funeral Home, under the guidance of Managing Director Brandon Burkhead, has figured out a way to honor cremated veterans in a way similar to their buried brethren.

According to U.S. Flag Code, "The flag, when it is in such condition that it is no longer a fitting emblem for display, should be destroyed in a dignified way, preferably by burning."

In Burkhead's mind, what could be more dignified than to dispose of a well-loved but weathered American flag with a U.S. veteran during cremation?

"The biggest concern that I had was a steady supply of flags," said Burkhead. "I didn't want to offer something and then not be able to do it for every veteran."

Burkhead, himself an Iraq War Veteran, reached out to his fellow veterans and got in contact with the local American Legion Ira Weaver Post 121.

The members of Post 121 independently operate a Flag Replacement Program for the people of Union County that honors the flag code, and

they usually have a backlog of flags awaiting respectful retirement.

So, when Burkhead made his proposal, the post members eagerly accepted, and the Cochran/American Legion Flag Retirement Program was born.

"When the families decide to indeed have a cremation of their loved one, it shows respect for the flag to the veteran, and the veteran to the flag," said Post 121 Past Cmdr. Don Sullivan. "That's the last thing that we could do to pay our homage for the time and effort that they've put in to protect our country."

Here's how the program works. When a veteran dies and the family chooses cremation, "permission will be sought for an unserviceable flag to drape that veteran for retirement in the most dignified manner," per literature provided by Cochran.

"Upon receipt of the cremated remains of their veteran, the family will receive a certificate stating the 'Last Deed of Service' for that flag, which was to drape their veteran during the cremation process," continues the literature. "A swatch of a single star from the flag being retired will accompany the certificate."

Along with a burial flag provided by the VA, Cochran will also assist families in receiving a Presidential Memorial Certificate in the name of their honored veteran as part of the program.

BOE Work Session change

The Work Session Meeting scheduled for February 5, 2018 will be moved to February 7, 2018. The meeting will be held at the Towns County Board of Education Office at 7 p.m.