

# Shook...from Page 1A

Shook. "Wrestling is a hard sport. There's a lot to it, and it teaches you a lot of lessons."

Shook will use his wrestling scholarship to help kickstart his postsecondary academic career, together with his already impressive list of awards, including the prestigious Zell Miller Scholarship.

He plans to apply to UGA's Terry College of Business, and is considering various majors currently, either in accounting, finance or some other business-related discipline, before moving on to attain a master's degree.

"I've been in FBLA since I've been in high school, and I've competed at both the state level and the national level in a few different competitions," said Shook, who will be traveling with his FBLA teammate Will De Vries this summer to compete in FBLA Nationals. "I just enjoy it a lot."

Shook has also played football for many years, from the second grade all the way through high school, and in high school, Shook has been involved in the Beta Club, the United Community Bank Junior Board of Directors, the Fellowship of Christian Athletes and other endeavors.

As for whether or not he'll be joining the Wrestling Club at UGA, Shook said he's still weighing his options, though he said he does plan to join the university's competitive powerlifting



**Shook winning a match at the Area tournament in January. Photo/Shawn Jarrard**

team, and may even go out for rugby.

The soon-to-graduate high school senior will enter UGA roughly one class short of being a sophomore, thanks to his dedication to joint-enrollment courses at Young Harris College over the past two years, and he hopes to finish at least a bachelor's and a master's degree within five years in Athens.

Shook's longtime wrestling coach at Towns County High, Jeff Stowers, sees the young man as the embodiment of the best of what Towns County has to offer.

Stowers also said that he believes Shook has what it takes to change the world.

The question, then, is whether Shook wants to change the world, as Coach Stowers believes he can.

"Most certainly," said Shook. "If I can impact someone else's life in the way that mine has been impacted, then that would be changing the world."

Added Shook: "I'd like to thank Coach Stowers, Ken Edwards, the Towns County teaching staff," said Shook. "Every teacher I've ever had has invested a lot in me, so there's a long list of people."

# Confederate...from Page 1A

said a few words in honor of the group's two recently lost compatriots.

Those honored Saturday were Joseph Adams Sr., who died in February, and David Friedly, who passed a week before the Confederate Memorial Day service, on April 22.

"Joseph was a former adjutant and a keeper of the record about the placing of flags on our Confederate dead," said Massengale. "David was a founder of the David W. Payne Camp No. 1633. He did many things to help get the camp going."

Massengale lauded Friedly for his extensive knowledge of the area's past, adding that what Friedly knew about local Confederate history was "beyond what we can comprehend."

"We owe a debt of gratitude to these men," concluded Massengale.

The keynote speaker for the day was Army of Tennessee Councilman Jason Boshers, who referenced Joshua Chapter 4 of the Old Testament to highlight the importance of monuments in remembering the past.

According to Boshers, through the story of Joshua and the stones of remembrance pulled from the Jordan River, God commanded that the Confederates also make memorials of stones.

Boshers said this in light of Confederate monuments that are being removed and replaced in other parts of the South.

Today, many descendants of Confederates feel that their cultural heritage is under attack, including the very celebration of Confederate Memorial Day.

This year marks the second year in a row that the state calendar has read "State Holiday" in place of "Confederate Memorial Day," and the numbers of participants in such events seem to be shrinking.

As remarked by Ledford at the beginning of the Memorial Day Service, honoring the Confederate dead with Confederate Memorial Day is a way for the living to remember their veteran ancestors.

"We gather in the spirit not to offend people, not to make political statements," said Ledford. "We come simply to honor those who gave the last, full sacrifice to their fellow neighbors, friends, countrymen, and that is altogether fitting and appropriate."

"No matter the conflict, no matter how long ago the conflict was, it is altogether a fitting and appropriate message to send to all veterans, past, present and even future, that no matter what, no matter how long, they will be remembered."

"In that spirit, we're here to do just that - remember the brave men and boys who charged into battle against very heavy odds, and fought and fought and fought until there was just nothing left to fight with."

Saturday's memorial service included pledges to both the American and Georgia flags, a salute to the Confederate flag, a recitation of the Charge of Lt. Gen. Stephen Dill Lee, the placing of a memorial wreath at the Confederate Monument inside the Union County War



**Jason Boshers, Army of Tennessee Councilman. Photo/Lowell Nicholson**



**Mike Kirkland with the annual cannon salute. Photo/Lowell Nicholson**



**Cmdr. David Junghans of the Sons of Confederate Veterans David W. Payne Camp 1633, giving a plaque dedication for Johnson P. Wellborn in the Old Blairsville Cemetery. Photo/Lowell Nicholson**

Memorial, as well as a removal of the Confederate battle flag from the monument.

In closing, Camp Piper Richard Smith performed "Amazing Grace," while Compatriot Mike Kirkland fired a triple volley cannon salute.

After the ceremony, Camp Cmdr. David Junghans held a plaque dedication at the gravesite of Confederate Johnson P. Wellborn in the Old Blairsville Cemetery.

Wellborn was a local farmer who died in the midst of the Civil War, but who served as one of two Union County delegates to Georgia's January

1861 Secession Convention in Milledgeville.

The other Union County delegate to the Secession Convention was James H. Huggins, who is buried in Athens. Huggins commanded the Confederate 23rd Georgia Volunteer Infantry Regiment.

Both the Sons of Confederate Veterans and the United Daughters of the Confederacy local chapters enjoy membership in Union and Towns counties, the latter of which was formed from parts of Union and Rabun counties some five years before the start of the Civil War.

# Mathis...from Page 1A

salary in 2015 was \$42,366, as reported to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs.

If the mayor was still making \$42,366 at the beginning of 2017, then her pay cut would have been \$25,376 annually, though the issue at hand is not the size of the increased salary, but the way in which Mathis arrived at that increased salary.

According to a press release issued by city hall on April 18, "as Mayor Mathis was considering retirement, the city discovered that certain procedural errors may have been made related to the method used for the official approval of the mayor's compensation."

Those "certain procedural errors" had to do with the process by which the mayor received salary increases over the years, a process that differed from the one outlined in the Hiawassee City Charter, which is itself subject to further conditions of state law.

The city charter says that the mayor's compensation must be set by ordinance, and the only ordinance on the books concerning the mayor's salary is from 1996, setting the mayor's salary at \$16,990, according to city hall.

When reached for comment, Mathis said that she received raises alongside other city employees, a process that explains how her salary increased over the years from \$16,990 in 1996 to its most recently reported amount.

And Mathis pointed out that her raises were always approved by city council, even if those raises weren't specifically provided by ordinance.

"When everybody else got a raise, they gave me one," said Mathis.

As far as who knew what and when they knew it, Mathis said it wasn't until recently that she found out her raises hadn't been following proper procedure for official approval, and no one else in city government was aware of a problem until the city began to look into the process of adjusting the salary for the next

elected mayor.

Furthermore, these same "procedural errors" may have been in violation of specific requirements spelled out by the state's Municipal Home Rule Act of 1965.

Under the Home Rule Act, one of the requirements for giving salary increases to elected officials deals with the timing of those increases.

Per state law, an increase to the salary of an elected official must wait to go into effect until after the start of the next regular term of that office.

This requirement is designed to safeguard against elected officials giving themselves arbitrary raises during their current terms in office.

Mathis, however, said she received salary increases alongside city employees, a process seemingly out of step with conditions for salary increases of elected officials as outlined in the Home Rule Act.

The Home Rule Act also contains provisions against raising compensation for elected officials during certain times in an election year, and requires that any salary increases for elected officials be run in the local legal organ once a week for three weeks prior to when the increase is approved.

Due to the fact that everyone at Hiawassee City Hall believed the "procedural errors" to have been made unintentionally and in good faith, and in light of the mayor's 21 years of service to the city, the Hiawassee City Council and Mathis last month signed a "Release of Claims Agreement."

The agreement, as spelled out in the April 18 release, provides that "both Mayor Mathis and the city will release the other party from any claims related to procedural errors that may have occurred in the past related to the mayor's compensation, payment of qualifying fees, and entitlement to retirement benefits."

Continued the press release: "The agreement

provides everyone with certainty in an unusual situation."

As previously reported, the mayor also discovered recently that she was not officially included in the city's retirement plan, though she had been paying into it, and the city amended its retirement plan in the April regular meeting to include Mathis.

Mathis retired as mayor of Hiawassee effective April 20 at 5 p.m., and since that time, Hiawassee City Council member and Mayor Pro Tem Liz Ordiales has been serving as acting mayor of the city on a full-time basis.

Ordiales does not receive compensation for her duties as mayor pro tem, though as a councilperson, she does receive \$200 per regular and special meeting of the city, as do all Hiawassee City Council members.

The laws concerning salary increases apply to all elected officials in governing bodies, including city council members.

As with Mathis, the only ordinance-established salary for council members comes from the lone ordinance that set the mayor's salary at \$16,990 in 1996.

According to that ordinance, council members should only be making \$100 per regular and special meeting, not the current rate of \$200 per meeting.

When reached for comment, Ordiales said the city will be following up with its attorney on the issue of council pay.

Ordiales also said that the city will be looking to set a new mayor's salary soon, before the municipal qualifying period begins in August for this year's mayor and council elections.

This new salary, according to Ordiales, will likely be more in line with the salary of the mayor of neighboring Blairsville, which is \$26,000 a year.

The new salary will take effect once the newly elected mayor assumes office this November.

# Floyd...from Page 1A

comes on stage, they just blow me away with how good they are.

"These students have shown tremendous improvements. I remember the first time we were here, these students didn't really have their speeches developed yet."

"From then until now, all of these students have made a huge, huge turn around and I'm really proud of them."

Joe Buckner, District 25 American Legion Commander, and Gary Meier, co-founder of the speech contest, served as the judges for the evening and, after great deliberation, announced the various winners for each middle school grade level, then the overall winner for the high school level.

Each of the winners received monetary prizes for their placement in the contest, depending on their grade and rank. The Mountain Movers and Shakers were the primary sponsors of the event, though many civic organizations, individuals and businesses in the community contributed as well.

For sixth grade, Elijah Moody, from Eastgate Life Academy, won first place with his speech about how films are developed and the necessity for more all-age appropriate, available conservative movie options.

Bayza Smith, from Towns County Middle School, took home First Place for seventh grade with her tell-all speech about how Greek mythology has been adopted into today's society, such as cities named after Greek gods.

Eighth grade Towns County Middle School student Vanessa Floyd won first prize



**Contest organizer Sam Fullerton presenting Bob Cloer with a special award for his continuous support for the Top of Georgia Speech Contest. Photo/Lily Avery**

with her interactive speech teaching the audience how to make a proper basketball rebound, commonly known as a "block out."

The high school category was split into three separate prizes, first, second and third place. Students in this category were not divided among grade, but were judged together.

For third place, both Samantha Church and Savanna Silvey tied for the honors. Church spoke on the harm of electronic devices while Silvey shared the importance of the Future Farmers of America Creed and agribusiness.

Second place also came out as a tie, with the two winners being Larson Church with her speech about teenagers gaining more responsibility in the community and Chase Rogers, who spoke on Donald Trump's presidential victory.

Finally, the overall winner for the competition was Towns County High

School student Kendall Floyd, for his speech that provided insight into the connections between the Republican Party phenomenon known as Donald Trump, the Future Business Leaders of America and public speaking.

Floyd has been an aspiring public speaker for several years, with this being his third year competing. Floyd is grateful for the opportunity he has had to participate and practice his skills.

"I didn't expect to win at all," said Kendall Floyd. "It feels pretty good to win, though."

MMS hosts this contest annually and will host another speech competition during the summer months. Dates for this competition will be released at a later date.

The Mountain Movers and Shakers meet every Friday morning at 8 a.m. at Mary's Southern Grill in Young Harris.