

Veterans...from Page 1A

the spouses of these veterans will be honored, not only for their partner's bravery and patriotism, but also for their own allegiance and loyalty to their spouses and to their country.

And for those who want to join in on more veteran festivities this week, the 242nd birthday of the United States Marine Corps is on Friday, Nov. 10, and will be celebrated at Daniel's Steakhouse at 5:30 p.m. This celebration is open to the public, for a cost of only \$15 per person.

VFW Post 7807 and all the veterans of Towns County would like to extend a warm "thank you" to Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff



The 2016 Veterans Day lunch at Foster Park. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

Bradshaw and all of those in the Towns County Commissioner's Office for the continued support

of all the veterans, veteran organizations and beloved Veterans Memorial Park.

Halloween...from Page 1A

the downtown square, each with buckets and buckets of candy to pass out to eager trick-or-treaters, and a few even had a few Halloween tricks up their sleeves.

Cyndi and Bill Daves of RE/MAX Town and Country not only had candy to pass out to the hundreds of costumed candy fiends, but a spooky photo booth for friends, family and fellow witchy creatures to snap a photo to document the evening.

"We're taking pictures with the kids," said Cyndi Daves. "This is our idea of giving back to community and trying to not be so commercial. So, what we're doing is taking pictures with the kids, giving them candy and having a good time."

"The parents can go to our Facebook page and download the photos, so it's a nice little keepsake for the evening. And it's something different for the parents and the kids and gives them something memorable for the evening."

This year was the Daves' first time participating in Hiawassee's Halloween on the Square and, according to Cyndi, after the wonderful time the two had last week, they cannot think of a better way to spend Halloween hereafter.

"We really love being able to give back to our community," said Cyndi. "This is our first time on the square here in Hiawassee. We've been to Blairsville before, but this is our first time in Hiawassee and we'll definitely be back."

"We're having a blast here tonight. It's so much fun and everyone who has come through our booth tonight has been awesome. It's been a great night."

Other booths during the night were also serving up special treats, such as the Red Cross Booth who passed out coffee and hot chocolate and the North Georgia Dance Arts, who showed off their skills several times with dances for



This was the biggest ever Hiawassee Halloween event. Just look at that line of trick-or-treaters! Photo/Lowell Nicholson



Until next year... Happy Halloween!

the crowd. Local emcee Ronnie Moffet served up entertainment all night, playing classic Halloween tunes throughout the evening and, come 6 p.m., called attention for all those dressed to impressed to head to the Gazebo for the annual costume contest.

Children 10 years old and younger were split into four different categories for the contest. For the 2 years old and younger category, of the 17 contestants, Victoria Medlin took first place with her biker baby outfit and second place was awarded to the cutest little strawberry around, Charlotte Hernandez.

Fifteen contestants were up for the 3 years old to 5 years old category, with first place

going to Jacob Smith, dressed as the house from Pixar's Up, and Kreed Mlodzik came in a close second with his scariest Pennywise clown costume.

Of the 14 contestants for the 6 years old to 7 years old category, Minnie Mouse-dressed Jayden Bagley took first prize and little Einstein Cannon Henderson took home second place. Finally, for the 9 years old to 10 years old category, of the eight that participated, cowboy turkey Logan Kevin took home first and the funniest jester around Tucker Wheeler took home second place.

All in all, it was definitely a Halloween to write home about, with plenty of candy, laughs and good, spooky fun to go around.

"With all of these candidates, I've had a lot of people ask who should they vote for," said Rep. Gurtler. "Well, what I would suggest is to do some research. Look at the candidates voting records and see how that correlates with how you vote and what you believe in."

"There's still time, so just make sure that you're voting for who aligns with your beliefs. Just beware of all of the rhetoric with these candidates. You have to keep your elected officials accountable, myself included."

Also during the meeting, Gurtler mentioned his ongoing internship program during the legislative session. For the 2017 session, Gurtler had two interns from Young Harris College who were given the opportunity to experience government proceedings first hand and walk away with a newfound knowledge and understanding of what exactly goes on in the state legislature.

"I'm trying to get young people involved in our government and what's going on," said Gurtler. "We're not going to change things if people aren't educated on what's going on and I think it's very important. What I'm doing is reaching out to all of the colleges across the district."

"These students can get to know the process and see what's really happening in Georgia government. It's a good way to give back to the community and to connect, so I'm excited to offer it again for this upcoming session."

To qualify for the internship, the student must be at least a senior in high school and reside in District 8, which includes Towns, Union, Rabun counties and parts of White County. For more details on the internship program and to stay up to date with Representative Gurtler, visit mattgurtler.com.

Gurtler...from Page 1A

"My priorities this session is going to be focusing on my bills," said Gurtler. "I introduced a couple of bills, one is constitutional carry. It basically makes the Georgia Weapons License an option."

Constitutional carry, essentially, is a bill that would allow citizens who can legally possess firearms to do so in most public places. However, this would not replace Georgia's current carry license and would leave it in place for reciprocity between the states.

"I think that it's not the proper role of government to be charging people money, a \$15 million tax, on a right," said Gurtler. "It becomes a privilege then. Twelve other states have already looked at this kind of legislation so we're looking forward to finding more support for it this year in the state legislature."

Another bill that Gurtler intends to continue with is a repeal of the Georgia State Hotel/Motel Tax. Introduced to the Georgia General Assembly and passed in 2015, this fee requires any facility that meets the qualification of a hotel to charge a fee to customers of \$5 dollars per night.

"This really affects our district a lot," said Gurtler. "Georgia is the only state in the

entire country that has this kind of tax, subsequently we also have the top four cities with the highest tax brackets for hotels and motels. Columbus comes in at a whopping 22.9 percent.

"When this was passed, it never went through a vetting process and this really affects our district because of tourism. We have a lot of tourism here and it's one of the biggest industries in our district."

"This really affects our small businesses because, for example, if a couple has a room for \$45 a night, then you add that \$5, it's going to seem like a lot more than a hotel in a larger city that already has a higher rate."

Several other representatives in the House have shown support for the repeal of the bill, which Gurtler sees as a promising sign for the upcoming assembly as he continues to campaign against the statewide tax.

In addition to policies and bills that Gurtler has introduced and supports, he also spoke briefly on the current campaign for Georgia's governor, offering advice for his constituents who may still be up in the air on which candidate they feel would be best for the job.

Historical Society November meeting

Residents of the community are invited to attend the November 13, 2017 program of the Towns County Historical Society at 5:30 p.m. at their building at 900 Hwy. 76 (close to the Anderson Bridge) in Hiawassee.

Do you know what area in Towns County is known as "Hiawassee River"? This area will be discussed by this evening's speaker, Virginia

Dyer Palmer, and a few of her friends. It is always interesting and fun to hear from those born in Towns County recall memories from their childhood. Many in the audience contribute too.

We also have CDs of previous programs, T-shirts, and Pictorial History Books, plus many historic memorabilia items on display. See you there.

Firewise...from Page 1A

recognized Firewise program out of Towns County.

To date, the Towns County Firewise Citizens Coalition – led by community volunteers with skin in the game – has a membership of 21 officially designated Firewise communities, with more in the works.

Union County is in on Firewise, too, as Firewise in Union just welcomed its second official community, with several more on the way.

As Riley and other fire safety officials like to say, Firewise is spreading like wildfire through the mountains, and that means more communities are safer from wildfire than ever before.

In celebration of these victories, and in recognition of the good work that's going on here, Riley and Towns County Firewise last month welcomed two Firewise professionals from the National Fire Protection Association, or NFPA.

The NFPA is a global nonprofit established 121 years ago, with stated goals of "eliminating death, injury, property and economic loss due to fire, electrical and related hazards."

Tom Welle and Cathy Prudhomme of the NFPA joined Riley, members of the Towns County Firewise Citizens Coalition, local elected officials and guests from neighboring municipalities, as well as federal, state and local fire professionals in a meeting on Tuesday, Oct. 17.

Together, the group discussed the successes and merits of the Firewise efforts



Frank Riley, executive director of the Chestatee-Chattahoochee RC&D Council. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

in North Georgia, especially in Towns County, where the number of fires has dropped dramatically in recent years.

And together, they reached a consensus about the most important aspect of any Firewise program – community involvement.

Prudhomme, who manages the Firewise Communities program nationally, said she was impressed with how many layers of community involvement existed in Towns and Union counties, from the sole commissioners down to the individual homeowners and everywhere in between.

"It's everybody coming together and really being a whole community, and everybody identifying their roles and doing something about it," said Prudhomme in the meeting. "Truly, it's our pleasure to be here, and to be able to listen to what you're doing and take those stories

back on the national level and share that."

Welle, who oversees the NFPA's Denver field office, was equally impressed with the level of community representation in the meeting, and with Firewise here generally.

"I've only been with NFPA coming up on three years, but in that time, I've gotten around the country quite a bit," said Welle. "I get to places like this and I wish I could bottle it because of what you guys do that we could give to the rest of them."

Firewise is all about protecting against fire by creating defensible spaces in neighborhoods and communities via the reduction of fuels around homes and other fire control practices.

The program also prepares people for what to do in the event of a wildfire, and above all, Firewise saves lives and property.

Barrett...from Page 1A

I'm very passionate about," said Dr. Barrett. "And you should be too because it affects you, even if it doesn't directly affect you, it does indirectly in some way or another."

According to Dr. Barrett, alcoholism affects one in every eight people in the United States. This number has jumped significantly over the last couple of decades, from one in every 10 people. And, Dr. Barrett said, this number will only increase if the causes of alcoholism are not thoroughly explained, down to the genetics of the disease.

"Lets put this into perspective, when you're driving down the road going to Blairsville, one in eight cars that you're meeting is driven by an alcoholic," said Dr. Barrett. "If you look at the profile of an alcoholic, no one is born an alcoholic, but there are certain people that are born with the predisposition to be an alcoholic."

"Studies have shown that if you have a close family member that is or was an alcoholic, then you are four times more likely to become an alcoholic yourself. Everyone is born with a specific biology."

"You are born with

heredity and a gene pool that will determine your propensity to become an alcoholic. Based on that, how you're born, and then the choices that you make determine the outcome of whether or not you become an alcoholic."

While most Americans know someone, either a friend or family member, who has suffered or is suffering the effects of alcoholism, there are still handfuls that may not see how it directly affects them. However, according to Dr. Barrett, alcoholism and those who are alcoholics sustain a financial burden of almost \$1,000 per year per capita.

"If you have a family of four, alcoholism is costing you \$4,000 a year," said Dr. Barrett. "You hear a lot about the cost so, if you want to break that down into drinks, about \$1.70 is the cost that each drink that's sold in this country is costing us, the citizens. It's really phenomenal."

Although Dr. Barrett cautions on the likelihood of alcoholism and its effects on society, he also noted that he is not judgmental of those who partake nor will he criticize the consumption of alcohol.

Dr. Barrett then went on

Congratulations to the Hiawassee 4-H Club

Monarchs Across Georgia (MAG) recently certified the Hiawassee 4-H Club after the members met the requirement of planting for pollinators such as butterflies, hummingbirds, bees, beetles, and moths. The group under the leadership of the UGA Extension's Judy Caines are the winners who will help to save our pollinators.

The Monarchs Across Georgia's Pollinator Habitat Certification Program was initiated in the Fall of 2005 in an effort to promote conservation, the restoration of native plants, and to provide citizens an opportunity to reconnect with the natural environment. MAG has been engaging schools and families in learning experiences

involving monarchs and other native butterflies for over seven years. With the decline of the monarch caterpillar's only host plant, milkweed, the group decided to create the certification program as a way to further encourage gardeners to incorporate milkweed into their landscapes.

Other habitat requirements that the group had to meet included providing additional caterpillar and adult pollinator nectar food sources, water and basking sites, and some type of shelter with choices ranging from dense shrubs, logs or brush piles. "They have successfully demonstrated their commitment to environmental stewardship and increasing native diversity for all pollinators,"

stated MAG chair, Michael O'Shield.

Whether you are limited to a small patio, or have an acre of land, Monarchs Across Georgia would like to also acknowledge your efforts in welcoming not only butterflies, but other pollinators to your garden too. All certified gardens are eligible to order a "Monarchs Across Georgia Certified Pollinator Habitat" sign.

For more information on how your can have your backyard, schoolyard, workplace, or place of worship certified, visit www.monarchsacrossga.org.

Monarchs Across Georgia is an initiative of the Environmental Education Alliance of Georgia, www.eeaalliance.org.