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flocked to the square could enjoy holiday music, coffee and hot chocolate per the Red Cross, rock painting, cookie decorating and plenty of games to go around.

To top it all off, Old St. Nick made his way to the Hiawassee Square in a Towns County Fire Department truck, escorted by the Hiawassee Police Department. As the children eagerly waited to tell Santa Claus their yearly Christmas wishes, the jolly man set up shop in the gazebo on the square, ready to make this list and check it twice.

But don't worry, he did not forget to grab the dozens of letters that made their way into the Santa Claus mailbox set up on the square as well.

Of course, no Christmas celebration would be complete without a Christmas tree and Hiawassee has several set up around the square this year. One tree dedicated to beloved Hiawassee Police Chief Jimmy Wright, another tree to represent downtown businesses of Hiawassee and another beautiful tree in the gazebo.

All around, it was a great night, with plenty of fun for the whole family.

"I think for our first year, we had a great turnout," said Mayor-Elect Ordiales. "Next year I hope to make it even better and hopefully a little bigger too."

Regardless, "Light



Santa Claus visited Hiawassee during its "Light Up Hiawassee!" Christmas event on Saturday, Dec. 2. Photo/Lily Avery



This was the first year for "Light Up Hiawassee!" Photo/Lily Avery

Up Hiawassee!" was a huge success, with dozens of locals enjoying the music, the holiday cheer and the close-

knit community that makes Hiawassee such a wonderful place.

Pearl Harbor...from Page 1A

were killed; and another 1,282 were wounded.

On Dec. 8, 1941, U.S. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt met with lawmakers in a joint session of Congress to tell them that a full declaration of war was necessary.

President Roosevelt described the Dec. 7 attack by the Empire of Japan as "a date which will live in infamy."

The U.S. entered World War II on two fronts, in Europe and in the Pacific, because of what happened 76 years ago.

We all know the end results.

Towns County resident and World War II Veteran Bud Johnson was aboard the USS Rhind, a destroyer, in the Atlantic Ocean when Pearl Harbor was attacked.

"I went in the Navy in April of 1939, when I was 17 years old, so I had two and a half years in the Navy," said Johnson. "I had spent all my time up until that time in the Atlantic fleet."

"I was serving on my second destroyer when we got the word that morning, with the time difference over here in the

Atlantic, and we were aghast at what happened - we couldn't believe it."

Johnson, now 95, was a petty officer third class aboard the USS Rhind, and he was on watch when his ship was informed of the attack.

He and his shipmates were on their way back from a stint in Europe, and their ship was due for upkeep and overhaul.

If Johnson had his way, America would remember Pearl Harbor the way it remembers veterans on Veterans Day.

"Dec. 7, it's a forgotten day," Johnson said. "Not forgotten by veterans, but the folks who fought in World War II are getting fewer by the day."

"Pearl is the reason we entered World War II. It's the reason that a million young kids enlisted in the U.S. military."

"It was one of the greatest acts of terrorism this earth has ever known, and it was on our soil. Forget? Not me."

Johnson wasn't a Pearl survivor, but he was at Iwo Jima a few years later.

He wouldn't have been

there if not for the Dec. 7, 1941, attack on Pearl.

"You have to trace every battle fought by a U.S. military man in World War II back to Pearl," he said. "President Roosevelt was right, it was a date that lived in infamy."

"It's time that each year we should honor the almost 4,000 that were killed or wounded on Dec. 7, 1941. It's no different than Sept. 11, 2001; it was just 60 years before the attacks in the Northeast."

Continued Johnson: "Same thing, both were acts of terrorism and both sent us to war. We remember the 9/11 victims, but we've almost totally forgotten the Pearl victims. That's a shame."

Johnson has compiled books on Pearl Harbor and Iwo Jima, and is working on his extensive autobiography. He has taken up a call to arms in serving veterans within the community, and that has become a large part of his purpose these days.

"As long as God gives me breath, I will honor these precious people out there who sacrificed for our freedom," said Johnson. "They paid the full price."

CASA...from Page 1A

- Union, Towns, White and Lumpkin counties - and helps more than 200 abused and neglected children in the foster system each year. Oftentimes these children are separated from their siblings and experience a great deal of confusion as they are processed through the system of social workers, foster homes and courts.

The purpose of a CASA volunteer is not only to give these abused and neglected children a voice within the legal system, but also a point of stability and certainty on a regular basis during a time when nothing is certain.

"Last year we serve 268 children in our four-county juvenile circuit," said Ruf. "There were 49 children who came from Towns County, which is over a 20 percent increase in the number of children served year after year. Our volunteers drove over 13,000 miles and volunteered over 1,600 hours to advocate for the abused and neglected children in Towns County."

The luminaries around the square were bought in honor of, memory of or just in thanks of individuals important to those donating, and the proceeds from the luminaries will be put toward assisting the CASA volunteers in helping children in need.

During the ceremony, Ruf read from a list of those whose names were added to luminaries in honor or memory of them.



Luminaries on the Hiawassee Town Square. Photo/Lily Avery

Those names included: Duane Miller, Earl Seaverns, Rufus Stark, Lawton Wofford, Catherine Courey, Jack and Francis Kern, Wakem Simon, Clifford W. Harpe, Betty P. Harpe, Tara T. Biery, Richard Botting, Sergio Izquierdo, Jorge Areiza, Angel Ordiales, Anthony Cataldo, Bill and Judy Rogers, Dick and Joan Gaeta, Cline Ray Grizzle, Heather Warne-Burg, Jimmy Wright, Kitty Bauer, Sally and Joe Thomas, Denny Woody, Anna Fonseca, Mimi, Marty Taylor, Margit Stortz, Betty Gwizdak, Lawson Russell, Doris Evelyer, Miep Noon, Betty Clifton, Lamar Robinson, Lucy Aparo, Gerri Anderson, Lorraine Anderson, Helen Coleman, Marguerite Drayton, Betty Born, Lelia Reis and Marion Stansell.

Before the event ended, Towns County Chamber of Commerce President Candace Lee, representing Lake Chatuge Rotary Club, made all in attendance aware of the ages and number of days the 49 children from Towns County that have spent time in the judicial system, moving from foster family to foster family, awaiting to find a permanent place to call home.

Of the 49 children, many had spent well over a year within the system, and most were under 12 years old.

At the end of the ceremony, Ruf thanked everyone for participating in the lighting of the luminaries and offered to speak with anyone in the crowd about how they could get involved with Enotah CASA to help work toward the best interests of children placed in the foster care system in the area. For those wishing to either donate or become a CASA volunteer, visit www.enotahcasa.org.

The presenting sponsor for the evening was Lake Chatuge Rotary Club. Other sponsors included: United Community Bank, Christ the King Church, Mr. and Mrs. Michael Berkman, Worthy Family Dentistry and Chatuge General Hospital.

Young Harris...from Page 1A

crowd following the lighting of the tree, which is smaller than the old one, but just as beautiful.

"And now, I believe we have a famous person joining us," said Mayor Gibby, and all the children began to call for that jolly old elf to appear.

Before they could see him, they heard the ringing of his sleigh bells, and as Santa Claus ho, ho, ho'd his way up through the gazebo, he led a line of happy children into Young Harris City Hall, to sit by the Christmas tree and take requests for Christmas.

The ladies of the Enotah Garden Club decorated the inside of city hall for Christmas, as they always do, and the tree lighting guests - especially the kids - laid into the smorgasbord of cookies and pastry treats.

"This is where the heart is, this is what brings people together in our community at the holiday time," said Enotah Garden Club Member Betty Walther, who is in charge of organizing the punch and cookies for the children.

The Garden Club is always looking to add members to its ranks, and interested members of the community can contact Young Harris City Hall for more information.

Many parents and children attended the Young Harris Tree Lighting on Dec. 1, including families from out of town.

The reason the tree lighting remains popular is that it has become a multigenerational tradition - a tradition that has been faithfully carried on, generation after generation.

Folks looking for some good holiday fun and entertainment should check out the following winter performances in the Anne Oliver Mitchell Auditorium at the Towns County Schools:

Cathy Seis and her elementary students will be performing their acting/singing/dancing show on two separate dates, each with a different cast, on Dec. 12 at 7 p.m. and Dec. 14 at 9:30 a.m.

And Allison Arnold will be directing the Towns County Schools Winter Band Concert, made up of middle and high school students, on Dec. 7 at 7 p.m.



Children crowded around Santa on Dec. 1 to make requests. Ethan Russell, 8, said he is thankful for his family at Christmas, and he's pictured here asking Santa for a Transformer toy. Photo/Shawn Jarrard



The new Young Harris Christmas Tree in Mayor's Park, donated by Annette Stookey. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

Habitat...from Page 1A

representatives and volunteers from other local organizations for a ribbon cutting and dedication.

And family matriarch Paula Lirette was thrilled to have everyone present for her home's dedication that Saturday.

The Lirette household consists of Paula, her son Michael, her daughter Chelsey, and Chelsey's son (Paula's grandson) Chance.

"This is going to be the home that we live and die in, so it's going to be for years and years," said Paula Lirette. "Just having Chance grow up here, we're a close family, so it's going to be wonderful watching him grow up."

Continued Lirette: "We came from a home that had mold in it, no heat, and it was too small. My daughter and grandson had to share a room. So, it's bigger, it's safer, just knowing that my grandson can play in a house that's not a health concern."

Lirette worked in the home during each weekend of the seven months it took to build, and also spent time in the Habitat for Humanity ReStore before construction of her home began.

"If somebody wants to apply for a Habitat house, I would definitely recommend it," said Lirette. "Even though the process itself takes a little while, it's worth it to have your family in a safe home."

Homes built under the guidance of Habitat always receive a blessing, and First United Methodist Church Pastor Mark Burgess happily agreed to fulfill that duty.

As has been customary in all 17 local home builds so far, Meg Whitley of CROP Walk presented Paula with a full pantry shop at her earliest convenience, and Sue Royal of the Misty Mountain Quilters' Guild gave handmade quilts to each of the new inhabitants of the home.

Following the blessing and presentations, guests of the Lirettes joined the family out front for a chamber ribbon cutting and group photo to memorialize the happy day.

Lunch included grilled hog donated by Jim Sadler and cooked by Jimmy Porter, Paula's boyfriend.

Habitat for Humanity Towns/Union Counties Executive Director Bryan Thomas said that the local



The Lirettes on the back porch of their newly finished home built by Habitat for Humanity Towns/Union Counties. Photo/Shawn Jarrard



Jimmy Porter and Paula Lirette inside the new Lirette kitchen. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

Habitat will be concentrating on its Helping Hands initiative in the coming weeks, but that the organization looks forward to building next in Towns County.

The members and businesses of the community that came together to volunteer and/or provide reduced price goods and services to build the Lirette home include:

Solomon Patrick of Patrick Construction; Builder's First Source; Salazar Roofing; Jim Sadler Siding; Electrician Mike Lirette (father of Michael and Chelsey Lirette); Service Plumbing; Hill HVAC; Budget Blinds; Home Depot; Abraham Patrick, Tile; Southern Cabinetry; Take-A-Break Portable Toilets; Tri-State Gutters; Vulcan Materials; Dean Everett, Grading; Just Foam It, insulation; and Attorney Kenya Patton for the closing.

"Habitat for Humanity Towns/Union Counties is part of a global, nonprofit housing organization operated on Christian principles," per www.TownsUnionHabitat.org.

"Habitat for Humanity Towns/Union Counties is dedicated to eliminating substandard housing locally through constructing and rehabilitating homes for families that qualify for Habitat's no-interest mortgage."

"Habitat for Humanity was founded on the conviction that every family should have a simple, durable place to live in dignity and safety."

For more information on how to get involved, visit the Habitat for Humanity Towns/Union Counties website.

TC Historical Society meeting

Towns County Historical Society meets at 5:30 p.m. the second Monday of each month at the old Rec Center in Hiawassee. Annual dues \$15 PO Box 1182, Hiawassee, GA 30546. NT(Dec6,ZJ)CA

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