

Lapidary Arts...from Page 1

Wagner, one of six Sparks children, took classes at the school after it began, but worked out of Florida running her own tax and accounting business. She kept the books for the nonprofit lapidary school and served on the board of directors, but after her father died and her mother became ill in the early 1990s, she came aboard as William Holland's director.



rock clubs. Since Wagner took the helm, the school has added extra lodging with Mary Lou's Cottage and Otto's Lodge, and students typically stay a week

per class. Prospective students may visit the campus to pick up an application, or check out the website for the online form at www.lapidaryschool.org. William Holland Lapidary School owes its success to the original vision of its founding father and mother, a vision which is summed up succinctly in the rockhound motto – each one, teach one. “For each one you learn, you teach one,” said Wagner. “That’s what we plan to do, that’s our motto here, is to make sure that we don’t lose this craft. There’s so many crafts that have died out because nobody

has passed it on. That’s what people who are rockhounds like to do, they share. And instructors will say that they’ve learned a lot from their students during the week.” Many teachers of the school were at one point students themselves, and so far, more than 60 students have signed up to take classes before this 30th season opens. Wagner, along with her brother Mike, a board member, who comes down from Minnesota to take classes each year, is looking forward to another great season. This year will also mark Bob Terebayza’s fifth season

as the school’s director, and Wagner would like everyone to know that she expects it to go on for another 30 years, even if she’s no longer in that particular leadership role. After all, before she came in, some people thought the school might fail after her father passed away. “They didn’t think it would go on, and I proved them wrong,” said Wagner. “And so, now I’m trying to back out of the daily stuff so that people will know that it will go on. We have eight people on the board, we have a good director, good staff – there’s no reason for it not to go,” Wagner said.

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like Georgia Tech, as she has already been accepted and it’s a great school for her discipline of choice moving forward. “I’m going to go into engineering,” said Diehl. “I’m not sure exactly what field, but I did take chemistry with Mr. Lance and I liked it a lot, so I’m considering chemical engineering.” Diehl chose Brent Lance as her STAR Teacher, a decision she made because he was a source of scientific inspiration in the classroom.

“He put a lot of effort into the class, and he was determined to see us learn and succeed,” said Diehl. “It was kind of a frustrating class, sometimes – I know not everyone in there was wanting to learn, I guess because chemistry isn’t everyone’s favorite subject. But he still was determined that we all succeed in there, and I just really liked it, which is why I’m considering chemical engineering.” Lance was a chemistry major in college, and conducted

research chemistry in graduate school. “While I was teaching at Arizona State University, I had a student or two that would come and try to get extra help because they had placed out of Chemistry I through AP programs, and come into the second part having gotten credit for the first part,” said Lance. “And they were struggling.” Even though the AP test said they were ready, which colleges will accept as credit for course completion if passed

with a high enough grade, Lance discovered that some students were not actually as well-versed in the requisite material as they needed to be to succeed in the higher level. “So, while I was doing my research there and teaching at Arizona State, they were like, wow, I wish you were my high school chemistry teacher, because now this is starting to make sense,” said Lance. Lance moved back East following his position at ASU, getting a job teaching lab at

Western Carolina University. He then took a position at Smoky Mountain High School in Sylva, NC, and most recently, he has been with Towns County High School for two years. “She was a good student,” said Lance, recalling having Diehl in his class. “She caught on rather quickly. She’s one of those students, you can ask her the next level question, and she could pick things that she was interested in and ask questions about. We did

cosmetic chemistry and talked about pesticides some. That’s what my research was in, pesticides and stuff like that.” Lance said that being Diehl’s STAR Teacher was an honor. “I know that Danielle has had great teachers, and for her to choose me as her STAR Teacher, it was very awesome, and I was very happy, because she’s a great student, and she does well in all her classes,” said Lance. “For her to pick me was awesome.”

Easter...from Page 1

hunts together. “The county puts in around close to \$1000 into the event each year,” he said. “Every egg that we have out there has a candy inside. Then of course, we have the special eggs with have little slips of paper to win the small Easter baskets or the large Easter baskets.” The special eggs were golden. Anyone who grabbed them won one of the twenty-six special Easter baskets. A special drawing was held for three lucky adults to win Easter baskets, too. The Easter baskets were bought locally at Fred’s. With 3,000 eggs, it seemed the hunt would take a long time, but Hooper explained otherwise. “It lasts about two minutes,” he said. “All the kids have three thousand eggs picked up



in two minutes.” The hunt was divided into two age groups, four-to-six years old and seven-to-nine years old, each on a different ball field. Age was the only limitation. “We always invite anybody from anywhere to come to it,” said Hooper. “North Carolina, anywhere. It’s not restricted to anybody. If you’re visiting, you’re welcome to come join in the egg hunt.”

Social Media...from Page 1

I didn’t know that much about it,” he said. Newman spoke at length about legal issues concerning a governmental social media accounts. For instance, the wording in a legal policy must be very specific or it leaves the a local government open to a lawsuit. “Lisa went into being very descriptive about using words like inappropriate,” recalled Stancil. “You’ve got to explain what inappropriate means. Like slander, posting confidential information, on and on. You have got to describe what inappropriate actions are. It’s got to be a very detailed policy.” Efforts are further hampered because it is necessary for local governments to respect the first amendment. Social media platforms are public spaces, so people can say whatever they want on Facebook or Twitter according to freedom of speech laws. However, government employees have to be subject to certain restrictions in order to protect the county. “You can’t have an employee who’s unhappy with Mr. Kendall, myself, another employee going on Facebook and slandering this person or

making untrue comments. You have to have some type of means to control it,” said Mathis. “To develop a social media policy, it will require an extensive amount of input from all departments, and also, we’ll have to have some legal advice.” Existing laws offer further complications. Mathis said that, for example, if emergency crews arrive on an accident scene and someone snaps a picture and posts it on social media, the county would be in violation of the federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), which aims to protect the confidentiality and security of healthcare information. “There’s been cases in other counties where pictures have been taken of wreck scenes and kids have been killed, and they found out about this on social media before they were actually contacted by proper authorities,” he added. “So there’s a lot of risk involved in posting on social media as far as local government.” Nevertheless, having a social media presence could

make the Towns County government function more smoothly and efficiently, especially when it comes to emergencies or other news. For instance, Towns County could follow the state model. The state of Georgia is using Facebook as an emergency notification system. “The state is using that to get the word out,” said Mathis. “The state is using Facebook to notify of winter storms. And not only is it there for the weather service, but they have friends on Facebook that are meteorologists, and those meteorologists make posts, and they put those posts on their Facebook account.” At the meeting, Newman used a copy of the State-level policy that’s being drafted to illustrate the complexities that come from governments having a social media presence. Mathis thinks that although writing the policy will be hard, it will be worth it. “It’s just an excellent way to let the public know what the county’s doing. If you want to get the word out to somebody, you put it on Facebook,” he said.

Enigma...from Page 1

puzzles actually still appear in daily newspapers. I have my students do them as punishment,” he said. Perry’s lecture neatly coincided with the release of the Oscar-winning movie The Imitation Game, which depicted British cryptologist Alan Turing’s breaking of the Enigma code. “Alan Turing is an absolute, amazing, stunning, super person, who is considered the father of computer science, who did a lot of work and what people didn’t know for a really long time is that he was involved in part in breaking the enigma machine, because that was kept secret for decades after world war two ended,” said Perry.

Historically, the Polish broke the Enigma code first, but that was in the early stages of the Enigma machine, before the Germans perfected it. Unfortunately for the Polish, their decryption methods stopped working only a few weeks before Hitler invaded. It wasn’t until 1942 that the British finally cracked the code for good. Much of that progress came from espionage. “If you can’t use mathematics, I guess espionage will work in a pinch,” Perry joked. A German defector named Hans Thilo-Schmidt had fallen on hard times, and persuaded his brother, a German general, to give him a job. Thilo-Schmidt’s security clear-

ance granted him access to sensitive information regarding the Enigma Machine, which he then sold to the French. “It was kind of inevitable,” said Perry. “We see it happen in these situations time and time again. He betrayed his county.” The information the Allies received from cracking the Enigma code was invaluable. With it, the Allies were able to mislead the German army in a number of important ways. The breaking of the code allowed the Allies to confuse Hitler over where they were to land on D-Day. This deception led Hitler to divert troops to unimportant areas, thus allowing the Allies to take an important step in the liberation of Europe.

Towns County Transfer Station burglarized

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer



Towns County sheriff's deputies examine evidence of the reported break in at the Towns County Transfer Station. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

The Towns County Transfer Station and Recycling Center was burglarized sometime between the hours of 4:45 p.m., when it closed on Thursday, April 2, and when it opened again on Saturday morning, April 4. The crime is still under investigation, so the Towns County Sheriff’s Office could not divulge what, if anything, was taken. Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall said that if the perpetrator did get cash, it would not have been much, as the money collected Thursday was taken and deposited at the end of the day, as is customary. “I showed up for work this morning, probably 20 minutes till 8, somewhere around in there, and noticed that the light was on,” said Mary Derochie, who is the scale operator at the transfer station. “I could see the lightbulb on as I pulled up. I always turn the lights out. So, I unlocked the door, and I obviously could tell that it had been broken into. I immediately backed out and called 911.” Whoever broke into the building decided to smash the sliding glass window that Derochie typically takes payments through. The gates to the facilities had been locked Thursday when Derochie went home for the day, and since there is only one way in and out for vehicles, the burglar must have

gotten onto the property by some means other than driving through the front, possibly on foot. TCSO Patrol Sergeant Jimmy Nations and Deputy Jeremy Parker were on the scene collecting evidence, including a search for fingerprints. The phone line leading into the building had been pulled loose, indicating that the burglar might have suspected a security system to be in place. “It was pretty upsetting,” said Derochie. “It’s upsetting to live here in the mountains and show up for work, and somebody’s broken in to where you

work. That’s unsettling.” Derochie has been with the transfer station since 2011, and said that she’s never seen a break-in there, but that according to Transfer Station Supervisor Steve Youngblood, the station had been burglarized before, many years ago. “This is something that the people need to know about,” said Commissioner Kendall, who visited the transfer station to check on Derochie and survey the damage to the building Saturday morning. “It’s not good news, but they need to know the good and the bad.”

Called...from Page 1

One option is to leave the precincts – Young Harris, Macedonia, Hiwassee and Tate City – largely as is. “And try to get the lines drawn in a way to where they honor historical boundaries,” said Board Co-Chair Mark Dehler. “Apparently, a couple of years ago, (the secretary of state’s office) just redrew without much input, and put some people who all their lives had voted in Tate City having to vote in Hiwassee – just cleaning up the boundary lines between the precincts as they already exist.” The second option would save the county money, as the board would be able to centralize its efforts during the election. “For example, you could do what Rabun County did, and that is to literally make the entire county one precinct,” said Dehler. “And inside their county seat, one large polling place, and everybody in the county has to go there to vote.” Should the board choose

this option, a single polling place in Towns County would be selected, situated in a relatively central location that is large enough for everyone in the county to go and vote. Another option is to make the county one precinct, but allow for multiple polling places. “In other words, everybody would be a member of the Towns County precinct, and then you could go to one of three locations to vote – one on the east side, one in the central part of the county and one on the west side,” said Dehler. “In other words, essentially Young Harris, Macedonia and Hiwassee.” This particular option plays out well logistically, as someone who lives in Macedonia but may be working in Young Harris could easily get away from work to vote in Hiwassee on Election Day. “It wouldn’t matter where you voted,” said Dehler. “But to do that, each of the polling places – and this

is something the secretary of state’s office is willing to work with us on, and we’re just starting that discussion – to do that, each of those polling places would have to have Internet connectivity. “And the reason is so that the express polls, which is the check-in machine, can talk and make sure that no one goes from Macedonia and votes, and then goes over to Young Harris and votes. In other words, it would be a real-time update of the entire voting database for the county, so that there couldn’t be duplicate votes on Election Day.” To reiterate, the voting machines themselves would not be connected to the Internet, only the check-in machines, which would ensure that residents voted only once. And according to Dehler, residents have always had the option to vote outside of their precincts by casting provisional ballots, which are counted separately but go into the county’s total when all is said and done.

Kiwanis Mountain Fair April 15-19

By Charles Duncan
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Blairsville - It’s that time of year again, yes, the Blairsville Kiwanis Mountain Fair is here again. Yes, it’s time for the Seventh Annual Blairsville Kiwanis Mountain Fair, scheduled for April 15-19 at the Union County Industrial Park on Airport Road off Highway 515. The fun filled adventure packs a carnival atmosphere, complete with rides galore. The event features traditional carousels to lots of rides for the kids. Without a doubt, there is something for everyone. The fair also includes games, cotton candy, candy apples, a petting zoo and so much more. The event brings to life a week of exciting rides, delicious food and fun games, providing one of the most exciting adventures this county has ever

experienced. It also makes a difference in the Union County community. The Kiwanis Fair brings the fun-filled carnival atmosphere here, with proceeds benefitting the county’s children. The many available rides include the Cyclops, the Pirate and the Mega Drop. There are lots of rides for the youngsters too. Don’t eat before you get there because there are ample supplies of appetizing food. Come join the family

tradition. Parking is free, and the gate admission price is a very reasonable \$2; children under 12 years old get in free. An unlimited ride ticket is available for \$15; single ride tickets also are available. Fair operation hours begin Wednesday – Friday 5 p.m.; Saturday at noon, and Sunday at 1 p.m. Come on out and support the Blairsville Kiwanis Mountain Fair. You’ll be glad that you did.