

The Badge

March 2023
Issue Seven



Towns County Sheriff's Office News



From the desk of Sheriff Ken Henderson:

As I personally reflect on the history of the Towns County Sheriff's Office, the backbone to our legacy and reputation continues to be our employees. Organizations that continue to prosper and move forward rely on their dedicated staff to achieve a distinguished community reputation. This is not always an easy accomplishment with today's challenges.

We will continue to invest the time and transparency you expect which translates into trust. I do not take my constitutionally elected office for granted. As your Sheriff, I am vigilant in my duties and responsibilities to do what is right, not what is always popular. I serve for and with the people of Towns County in a manner that represents their best interests.

I have an open-door policy for all that work with me and for those I serve. Please take some time to visit your Sheriff's Office as the men and women of the Sheriff's Office are the backbone to our successes. I encourage each one of you to get to know these great folks. Their dedicated efforts are why your Sheriff's Office is leading the way.

We are pleased to once again offer our community a chance to learn about all the duties entrusted to the Towns County Sheriff's Office. The Sheriff's Law Enforcement Academy classes will begin April 18, 2023. Application information is included in this edition. I hope to see you there.

I continue to be honored, humbled and committed to your safety and quality of life. I care about each one of you and will continue to look for innovative and creative ways of policing for you.

Sheriff's Law Enforcement Academy

We are now accepting applications for our next Sheriff's Law Enforcement Academy which will begin April 18, 2023, and will be held each Tuesday from 10:00-Noon. This is a 10-week course offered to all Towns County residents, employees, and business owners that are age 21 and over. During the course, presenters from the Towns County Sheriff's Office and guest speakers from other partnership agencies will provide a better understanding of operations through hands-on training and law enforcement knowledge. You can pick up an application at the Towns County Sheriff's Office. Applications are also available at <https://www.townscountysheriff.org/tcsa> . Completed applications may be dropped off at the Towns County Sheriff's Office, located at 4070 State Highway 339, Young Harris. The deadline to apply is Friday, April 14, 2023. For more information you can contact us at (706) 896-4444

FEBRUARY DRUG ARRESTS:



All persons are presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

Scam Warning from the IRS

With the new tax season starting this week, the IRS wants to remind taxpayers to be aware that criminals continue to make aggressive calls posing as IRS agents in hopes of stealing taxpayer money or personal information.

Here are some telltale signs of a tax scam along with actions taxpayers can take if they receive a scam call.

The IRS will never:

- Call to demand immediate payment using a specific payment method such as a prepaid debit card, gift card or wire transfer. Generally, the IRS will first mail a bill to any taxpayer who owes taxes.
- Threaten to immediately bring in local police or other law enforcement groups to have the taxpayer arrested for not paying.
- Demand that taxes be paid without giving taxpayers the opportunity to question or appeal the amount owed.
- Call unexpectedly about a tax refund.

Taxpayers who receive these phone calls should:

- Record the number and then hang up the phone immediately.
- Report the call to TIGTA using their [IRS Impersonation Scam Reporting form](#) or by calling [800-366-4484](tel:800-366-4484).
- Report the number to phishing@irs.gov and be sure to put "IRS Phone Scam" in the subject line.

In the latest scam related to Social Security numbers, scammers claim to be able to suspend or cancel the victim's SSN. It is another attempt by con artist to frighten people into returning 'robocall' voicemails.

Welcome K-9 Zeus



Towns County Sheriff Ken Henderson welcomes a third addition to our K-9 unit.

Due to Sheriff Henderson's ongoing commitment to the war on drugs here in our community he has welcomed K-9 Zeus aboard. Zeus and his partner, Deputy Tyler Davis, are assigned to our Drug Investigation Unit and will be patrolling zones throughout the county.

Sheriff Henderson believes it is fundamental to incorporate K-9's in all aspects of our proactive approach to drug investigations and eliminating drugs in our community. Welcome, Zeus!!

Drug Arrests

Early Sunday morning, a Towns County Sheriff's Deputy observed a vehicle driving suspiciously and without tag lighting and initiated a traffic stop.

During the stop, the driver was discovered to be driving without a valid license and insurance. A search of the vehicle resulted in a large quantity of suspected Methamphetamine laced with Fentanyl, which field tested positive with a weight of 7.12 grams.

Michael Darren Sears, age 54, of Williamsborough, SC was arrested and charged with:

- Felony Possession of Methamphetamine
- Possession and Use of Drug Related Objects
- Driving with License Expired
- No Proof of Insurance
- No License Tag
- Tag Light Violation

Sheriff Ken Henderson commends the deputies for a good job and for keeping these dangerous drugs from reaching the streets of Towns County.



On February 14, 2023, Towns County Sheriff's Office Drug Investigators assisted Georgia State Patrol on a stop in the area of Hiawasse Fruit Stand and a probable cause search was conducted resulting in the confiscation of Methamphetamine, THC Wax and Drug Paraphernalia.

The following individuals were arrested and charged as follows:

Chanda Dawn McGowan, age 35, Marble, NC

- Felony Possession of Methamphetamine
- Felony Crossing Guard Lines with Weapon/Drugs/Intoxicants

Joseph William Campbell, age 34, Marble, NC

- Felony Possession of THC Wax
- Felony Possession of Methamphetamine
- Felony Crossing Guard Lines with Weapon/Drugs/Intoxicants



All individuals are presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law

Drug Arrests continued

Uniform Patrol deputies and K-9 Deputy working drug suppression made a traffic stop at 12:30 AM, February 28th on Highway 76.

The vehicle was initially stopped for a traffic violation. K-9 Dakota alerted on the vehicle and a search was conducted resulting in the confiscation of Methamphetamine, along with Schedule IV controlled substance and drug paraphernalia.

Sheriff Ken Henderson stated that this was a great job by patrol and K-9 officers working together to keep our community safe.

Jonathan Isreal Griffin, age 38, Westminster, SC was arrested and charged with:

- Felony Possession of Methamphetamine
- Felony Possession of a Controlled Substance, Lorazepam
- Possession and Use of Drug Related Objects
- Drugs not in Original Container

The driver was charged with various traffic violations.

****All subjects are presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law****



What Happens after an Arrest?

Every day, law enforcement officers are patrolling our streets and conducting investigations into perceived violations of the law. If a law enforcement officer gathers enough facts and evidence to establish probable cause an individual has committed a crime, that person can be arrested and taken to jail. In Towns County, deputies with the Towns County Sheriff's Office (TCSO) have the authority to arrest, as well as other law enforcement officers with agencies such as the Young Harris College Police, Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Georgia State Patrol (GSP) and various other state and federal agencies.

Once an arrest is made, the arrestee is transported to the Towns County Detention Center which is run by the Towns County Sheriff's Office. The Sheriff's Office is responsible for ensuring arrestees remain in custody pending trial or if they are sentenced to the county jail; and are kept in a safe and secure environment until released by order of a Judge.

All new arrestees brought into custody are entitled to a first appearance bond hearing which must occur within 48 hours of the arrest. If the arrestee is unable to pay their bond, or their charge does not allow for a bond, they are held until trial. The Judge is the one who sets a bond and is the only person with the authority to modify a bond. The Sheriff's Office is required to release any person who pays the appropriate amount for their bond and hold any person in custody who is unable to pay their bond or who does not have a bond. Bonds are controlled by a bond schedule that determines the amount of bond an arrestee must pay to be released on their charges.

Law enforcement reports and any evidence is forwarded to the District Attorney's Office for review to determine whether formal charges should be filed and what charges are appropriate. The District Attorney has the authority to modify any charges as they deem appropriate and if they decide to file formal charges, they may offer a plea agreement to the defendant to resolve the case.

Once a defendant is sentenced, the Sheriff's Office will take custody of the defendant if they are sentenced to county jail or state prison. If sentenced to state prison, the jail will hold the defendant until they are transported to the proper state prison facility.

New Vehicle for Towns County School Resource Officer

The Towns County Sheriff's Office recently received a new Dodge truck that will serve as the dedicated School Resource Officer's (SRO) vehicle and decided to do something a little different with it.

Although the new truck has all the markings as our other patrol units, the new SRO truck which will be driven by SRO Corporal Donnie Jarrard has the Towns County Indian decal proudly displayed on each side of the truck.

Towns County Sheriff Ken Henderson stated that this was all made possible by working together with Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw and Towns County School Superintendent Dr. Darren Berrong.



St. Michael's Coin



Sheriff Ken Henderson is pleased to accept the St. Michael's coin from Patch Wihnyk and his grandson Logan Morrison.

The archangel Michael is the patron of both the military officers and the police officers and people who work in dangerous conditions. The St. Michael's coin is the epitome of some values upheld by law enforcement like honor, duty, and the victory of good over evil.

Sheriff Henderson stated it is an honor to receive the coins and would like to thank Mr. Wihnyk and Logan for giving a coin to each of our deputies.

Towns County Sheriff's Office Auxiliary



Have you ever wanted to volunteer and help in your community but didn't know where to start? Consider joining our Sheriff's Auxiliary. Auxiliary can be utilized to assist with security, crowd control, traffic youth education, and crime prevention programs.

Auxiliaries *are not* used in place of law enforcement personnel; however, they may be used in a low-profile way to supplement their efforts. Utilizing Auxiliaries to their full potential provides a labor cost saving for the Agency. TCSO Auxiliary members may participate in assisting with security at the Anderson Music Hall, assist during the Sheriff's Christmas Parade and Shop with the Sheriff; among other events.

If you are interested in joining the Towns County Sheriff's Office Auxiliary you can find the application on our website at www.townscountysheriff.org; or you may pick one up at the Sheriff's Office, located at 4070 State Highway 339, Young Harris.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Community Relations Coordinator Jill Gittens at (706) 896-4444 or jgittenstcs@townscountyga.com

COURT DISPOSITIONS

As Towns County Sheriff's Office continues our Drug Suppression Initiatives, the District Attorney's Office is busy prosecuting offenders. As a result, the following individuals have been convicted and sentenced during the January 2023 term.

- Kevin Joseph Sears, age 66, Young Harris, GA:
 - Sale of Methamphetamine
 - 20-year sentence, to serve five (5) in confinement
 - \$5,000.00 fine
 - Sale of Methamphetamine
 - 20-year sentence, to serve five (5) in confinement, concurrent with above sentence
 - Possession with Intent to Distribute Methamphetamine
 - 20-year sentence, to serve five (5) in confinement, concurrent with above sentence
 - Possession of Methamphetamine
 - 3-year sentence, concurrent with above sentence
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- Johnathan Clyde Dills, age 41, Young Harris, GA:
 - Possession of a Schedule II Controlled Substance
 - 3-year sentence to serve 120-160 days (deemed served) with the balance to be served on probation
 - \$2,500.00 fine
 - Possession of Drug Related Objects
 - 12-month sentence to run consecutive to above sentence
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- Bryson Daniel Wood, age 19, Cleveland, GA:
 - Violation of Georgia Controlled Substances Act
 - 3-years of probation
 - \$1,250.00 fine
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- Marquis Gwan Ford, age 42, Bennettsville, SC:
 - Possession of Methamphetamine
 - Three (3) years of probation
 - \$2,500.00 fine
 - Possession of Schedule II Controlled Substance
 - 3-years of probation, to run concurrent with above sentence
 - Possession of Drug Related Objects
 - 12 months of probation, to run concurrent with above sentence
 - \$500.00 fine
 -
- Brenda Anne Baldwin, age 50, Hiawassee, GA:
 - Possession of Methamphetamine
 - 3- year sentence with the first 60 days in confinement (deemed served)
 - \$2,500.00 fine
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- Jolena Marvilia Nichols, age 53, Hiawassee, GA:
 - Two counts Sale of Methamphetamine
 - 15-year sentence, must serve six (6) in confinement
 - \$2,500.00 fine
 - Two counts Possession of a Schedule I Controlled Substance
 - 3- year sentence, to run concurrent with above sentence
- Christopher Dwight Barnard, age 21, Hayesville, NC:
 - Sale of Methamphetamine
 - 20- year sentence, must serve six (6) years in confinement
 - Sale of Methamphetamine
 - 20-year sentence, must serve six (6) years in confinement, to run concurrent with above sentence
 - Sale of Marijuana
 - 10- year sentence, must serve six (6) years in confinement, to run concurrent with above sentence.

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- Tristan Cable Brown, age 20, Young Harris, GA:

- Possession of Methamphetamine
 - 3- years of probation
 - \$2,500 fine

Sheriff Ken Henderson would like to thank all the Towns County Sheriff's Office deputies, K-9s and investigators for their hard work to take these drugs out of our community and would also like to thank the Towns County District Attorney's Office and the Towns County Clerk of Court Office for all the hard work they have done to bring these cases to a close.

C.H.A.M.P.S Graduates

Today's students face dangers older generations could not have imagined. Choosing Healthy Activities and Methods Promoting Safety (C.H.A.M.P.S.) was founded in 2003 by the Georgia Sheriffs' Association to address these urgent challenges.

Fifth graders go through a twelve-week program one day a week with School Resource Officer Sally Tanner who is equipped with lesson plans covering the following:

Internet Safety & social media
Alcohol
Leaders & Followers
ATV Safety
Marijuana
Bullying
Methamphetamine
Peer Pressure
Choices & Consequences
Prescription Drug Abuse
Cocaine
Stress
Gangs
Tobacco
Understanding & Avoiding Violence
Home Alone / Child Abduction Safety

The following students received the role model award: Reid Brown, Charli Jones, Harper Oliver, and Owen Ward.

Essay winners are Lexi Deerman, Connor Nelson, Caroline Brennan, Averie Byrd, and Jonah Baker.

The overall essay winner is Caroline Breannan.

Sheriff Henderson would like to congratulate all the students that participated and praises their hard work. He would also like to thank SRO Sally Tanner for her dedication to the kids and this program.



If you would like to receive the monthly newsletter, please contact Community Relations Coordinator Jill Gittens at (706) 896-4444 or jgittenstcso@townscountyga.com

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4070 State Highway 339
Young Harris, GA 30582

(706) 896-4444

www.townscountysheriff.org