

The Badge

July 2024
Issue Twenty-Three



Towns County Sheriff's Office News



From the desk of Sheriff Ken Henderson:

I hope you have been able to get out and enjoy some of the community events as the summer season begins. Towns County Sheriff's Office is prepared for one of the busiest times of the year.

Towns County offers many outdoor activities like camping, hiking, and boating and swimming in Lake Chatuge. I would like to once again remind everyone to prioritize safety with all your activities.

With the 4th of July approaching, I would like to remind everyone to use caution when using fireworks. Here are a few safety tips:

Under Georgia fireworks law, fireworks are allowed until 11:59 PM on July 3rd and 4th.

- Never allow young children to handle fireworks or hold lighted fireworks in their hand.
- Never point or throw fireworks at another person.
- Do not re-light or handle malfunctioning fireworks.
- Keep a bucket of water nearby to fully extinguish fireworks that don't go off or in case of fire.
- Never use illegal fireworks.
- Sparklers are a lot more dangerous than people think. According to reports, sparklers alone account for more than 25% of emergency room visits for fireworks injuries.

I would like to wish everyone a safe and Happy 4th of July.



Towns County Sheriff's Office Mission Statement

Our Mission is to modernize the Towns County Sheriff's Office and to provide quality enforcement services using proactive enforcement, community partnership and problem solving, which will create a safe, secure, and desirable living and working environment for our citizens and visitors.

JUNE DRUG ARRESTS:



ALL PERSONS ARE PRESUMED INNOCENT UNTIL PROVEN GUILTY IN A COURT OF LAW.

JUNE DRUG ARRESTS

On Tuesday, June 25th, the Towns County Sheriff's Office uniform patrol officers were conducting concentrated patrols, and a traffic stop was conducted on Hwy 76 at Anderson Bridge.

K-9 Drago was deployed to conduct a free air search and alerted. Probable cause was established to search the vehicle and an amount of psychedelic mushrooms were located and confiscated.

Andrew Sean Martin, age 29, Clarksville, GA was arrested and charged with Felony Possession of a Controlled Substance.

Sheriff Ken Henderson stated these concentrated patrols will continue in an effort to keep our community safe.



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

MARIJUANA DISCOVERED – PACKAGED FOR SALE

On Monday, May 27th, Towns County Sheriff's Office received a call in reference to marijuana that had been found under a tarp in a wooded area behind the Sand Bar on Dogwood Lane. The drugs were in a tote with a lid and appeared to be Marijuana. Inside the tote were multiple containers and multiple plastic packets seeming packaged and ready for sale. Based on the packaging and the amount of drugs, the tote was used as a portable drug operation that could be moved from place to place.

Sheriff Ken Henderson is pleased that the drugs were intercepted prior to being distributed throughout the community; interrupting the drug trade.

The investigation is ongoing.



JUNE STATISTICS

June 2024 Arrests.	24
Traffic Crimes Total.	20
Personal Crimes Total.	13
*Aggravated Sodomy.	1
*Child Molestation.	1
*Cruelty to Children.	1
*Disorderly Conduct.	1
*Obstruction of Law Enforcement.	3
*Rape.	1
*Simple Assault.	1
*Simple Assault Family Violence.	1
*Simple Battery against Law Enforcement.	2
*Simple Battery.	1
Property Crimes.	6
*Arson.	1
*Criminal Damage to Property.	2
*Criminal Trespass.	1
*Theft by Shoplifting.	1
*Theft by Taking.	1
Contemtable Crimes Total.	7
*Bench Warrant/Failure to Appear.	3
*Possess/Control Material Depicting Minor/Explicit.	1
*Probation Violation.	3
Substance Crimes Total.	18
*Driving Under the Influence Drugs/Alcohol.	8
*Pedestrian Under the Influence.	2
*Possess/Use of Drug Related Objects.	3
*Possess/Purchase/Manufact/Distribute Marijuana.	3
*Possess/Manufact/Distribute/Methamphetamine.	1
*Possess/Purchase Sale/Manufact/Controlled Substance.	1

INDIVIDUAL CHARGED WITH SEXUAL ASSAULT

On June 3rd, Towns County Sheriff's Office was contacted by Cleveland GA Police in reference to a child sexual assault here in Towns County.

Towns County Sheriff's Office Investigations opened an investigation into allegations of sexual abuse in Towns County. The investigation further revealed that Tanner Trimble Boyd, age 31, Hiawassee was involved in the sexual assault of a young child which is a family member.

Boyd is charged with:

- Felony Rape x2
- Felony Aggravated Sodomy
- Felony Child Molestation
- Felony Cruelty to Children
- Furnishing Obscene Materials to Minors

He is being held without bond in the Towns County Detention Center and has charges pending in White County, GA.

Sheriff Ken Henderson commends the investigation into very sensitive criminal activity. The investigation continues.



Individuals are presumed innocent until found guilty in a court of law

LIFE SAVER AWARD

On June 5th, the Towns County Sheriff's Office received a domestic dispute call at a residence on Windjammer Drive. When deputies arrived, the complainant was outside and stated a family member was in her residence.

When deputies approached the door, they discovered the suspect had barricaded himself inside and was threatening suicide. The suspect had also set fire to the kitchen and flames could be observed through the window. Sgt. Osborn and Dep. Nguyen, along with Lt. Forsyth, Sgt. Franklin, Invest. Brackett, and Invest. Barrett forced entry into the locked door.

The house was filled with heavy smoke and the suspect was found lying on the floor unconscious having been overcome by the smoke. The suspect also attempted suicide by hanging himself with a belt.

The suspect was dragged outside and given CPR by deputies, EMS and Fire personnel.

The fire was extinguished by Towns County Fire personnel.

The suspect was life flighted to a hospital where he was later released and arrested.

Graham Phillip McKay, age 40, Hiawassee was arrested and charged with:

- Felony Arson, First Degree
- Felony Criminal Damage to Property, Second Degree
- Battery (Family Violence)
- Criminal Trespass (Family Violence)

McKay is currently being held at the Towns County Detention Center without bond.

An awards ceremony was held Friday, June 28th, at which time Sheriff Henderson presented Sergeant Justin Osborn, Deputy Keanu Nguyen, Lieutenant Ryan Forsyth, Sergeant Mike Franklin, Investigator Billy Brackett, and Investigator Darringer Barrett with commendation letters, Life Saver awards and ribbons.

Towns County Sheriff Ken Henderson commends these officers for their bravery and courage by risking bodily harm and placing their lives at risk by entering a smoke-filled burning house to save the life of another. They are true heroes.



COUNTERFEIT MONEY ALERT

On Thursday, June 6th, a Towns County deputy received a report of a counterfeit \$20 bill a resident received as change from a store within Towns County.

Sheriff Ken Henderson would like to share the following information to assist you in recognizing counterfeit bills:

- Evaluate the feel of the paper. Generally, fake money does not have the crisp money feeling and the raised feeling of the black on the front of the bills.
- Study the watermark on the right side of the bill. On some bills it's a replica of the face on the bill and on others it can be an oval spot. Hold the bill up to the light. The watermark should be visible on the right side of the bill. If you hold the bill toward the light and there is no watermark, or if you can see the watermark without holding the bill to the light, then the bill is probably counterfeit.
- Look for raised printing. Run your fingernail slowly and carefully down the note, you'll feel resistance from the note and some vibrations on your nail from the ridges of the raised printing. A good location to check is the coat of the president.
- Look for the fibers. Paper money is actually made of cotton and linen. Look for red and blue fibers that are embedded in the paper. Lines should not be printed or drawn on the bill.
- Look for the plastic strip inside the bill. The strip goes from the top to the bottom of the bill. This does not apply to \$1 and \$2 bills.

If you suspect you have received a counterfeit bill, please contact the Towns County Sheriff's Office. Place the bill in an envelope and handle it as little as possible. The \$20 bill pictured is counterfeit.



2024-01 Sheriff's Law Enforcement Academy Graduation

Towns County Sheriff's Office held graduation for the 2024-01 Sheriff's Law Enforcement Academy participants today in the Family Life Center at McConnell Memorial Baptist Church.

Chief Deputy Gene Moss addressed the class and presented each participant with a Certificate of Completion.

During the past ten weeks participants have learned about the many aspects of the Sheriff's Office; from road patrol to jail management, court services to administrative duties, criminal and drug investigations to partnerships with DNR, GSP and the GBI, as well as the School Resource Officer program.

One participant stated, "This is my second time taking the class and it just keeps getting better!"

Towns County Sheriff's Office is accepting applications for the 2024-02 class which will be held in the Fall. Applicants will be notified when the class dates are determined.

Applications can be picked up at the Sheriff's Office, located at 4070 State Highway 339, Young Harris.

Sheriff Ken Henderson states it is wonderful to have citizens that are interested in our agency and are willing to participate in this class and volunteer to assist our agency in keeping Towns County a great place to live.



TOWNS COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE VISITS TOWNS COUNTY CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER CLASS

On June 27th, Sheriff Ken Henderson and Towns County Sheriff's Office staff paid a visit to the preschool class at the Towns County Child Development Center.

The kids were very excited when everyone walked into the room and Sheriff Henderson spoke to them about how law enforcement is always available to help. Meeting with young children is a great opportunity to reinforce a positive image of Law Enforcement.

Towns County Sheriff's Office joined with the kids in reciting The Pledge of Allegiance, then Sheriff Henderson presented each child with a goodie bag that contained a stuffed animal, blanket, books, and crayons.

Sheriff Ken Henderson stated, "It is always a heartwarming experience when we get to interact with young children and give them a chance for positive interaction with law enforcement."



SUMMER SAFETY TIPS

Warm weather often means a greater risk of heat-related illnesses and more water and outdoor activities. Below are a few tips to beat the heat and stay safe during the hot summer months.

1. **Stay hydrated:** Drinking water is important anytime but is super important during hot weather. To stay hydrated in the heat, cut back on your alcohol intake, avoid caffeine and drink plenty of fluids – even if you don't feel thirsty.
2. **Limit time outside during peak hours:** The sun's peak hours are between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. Strenuous activities should be reduced, eliminated, or rescheduled to the coolest time of the day.
3. **Wear lightweight clothing:** Dark-colored clothing absorbs heat. Keep this in mind when you dress for summer. Choose loose, light-colored clothing. It reflects heat, helping your body maintain a normal, safe temperature.
4. **When you are at home a good way to keep heat out and cool air in is to close your window blinds, shades or curtains.** Ceiling fans and portable fans can help circulate air. Limit the use of your oven and other heat generating appliances. And don't forget about your vehicle. If you do not have access to a garage, look for shaded spots to park and use window sunshades to help ward off heat.
5. **Keep your meals light:** Chilled foods such as salads are good non-heavy meals during hot weather. For snacks, think cucumbers, berries and watermelon – food that have high water content, PLUS they help you stay hydrated too.
6. **Watch for heat advisories:** Just as with storm watches and warnings, heat advisory alerts follow the same criteria:
 - a. An excessive heat watch is issued when the risk of a heat wave increases but has not yet occurred. The watch is intended to provide enough lead time so those who need to set their plan in motion can do so.
 - b. An excessive heat warning is issued when a heat wave is in progress or on the very near horizon. The warning is used for high heat conditions that pose a significant threat to life.

Towns County Sheriff's Office would like to wish everyone a safe and happy Summer



Social media and other digital applications play a huge role in the lives of many kids. They serve as a source of entertainment, virtual places for friends to meet up, and also can be used as learning tools. However, some media can become stressful, all-consuming, and even unsafe.

HealthyChildren.org has issued some useful tips to assist you in ensuring that your child's media use remains a safe and healthy way to connect with others:

1. **Build a family media plan that balances time with and without devices.** Work together to set rules about media use to fit into your lives. Talk about which tech-free activities you want to make time for on a regular basis.
2. **Create screen-free times and places in your home,** such as meals and bedtime. Set do-not-disturb on phones when you want undistracted time. For younger children, it helps to have consistent and predictable media routines and time limits. Use built-in timers to make it easier for young children to transition away when time is up.
3. **Have regular discussions as a family about your online activities.** Discuss new areas of learning, fun discoveries, as well as difficult experiences – for both parents and children. This fosters open discussion about a sometimes challenging topic.
4. **Talk about social media** – Start regular, open-minded conversations with your children (even the youngest ones!) about their media use, and yours. You don't have to be an expert on each platform to have meaningful discussions! Ask questions like: What do you like about social media platforms? How do you feel when you're on social media? And when I'm on social media?
5. **Make sure your kids know they can come to you about their experiences online** – even if they feel embarrassed or worried. Let them know you're there to support them through challenges, since we're all learning as we go.
6. **Help children understand what's real and what's edited** – How to recognize ads and inappropriate content, and when influencers are being authentic versus outrageous.
7. **Talk about how media and emotions connect** – We sometimes crave social media when we're stressed or want to share our joy. At the same time, what we see online shapes how we feel. This is an important insight for both children and parents.
8. **Set a good example** – Include your own habits in discussions about social media usage. Be aware of when your attention is on your device and what you may be role modeling. When you must use your device around your family, tell your kids what you are doing and how you're supporting others online.
9. **Optimize your family's online experience** – Choose quality content to use together as a family. Also empower your children to decide when content isn't worth their time or attention.
10. **Check settings** – When your child or adolescent starts a new social media or video game account, set parental controls and privacy settings at the most secure level. Discuss safety rules for who they can chat with online, how to report problematic posts and whether they can make purchases. Get familiar with how the platform works by reading about it or having your child take you on a tour.
11. **Watch for signs of problematic media use** – In adolescents, this could include withdrawing from friendships and hobbies. In younger children, signs include arguing about media constantly and lack of interest in other activities. At all ages, another red flag is if time on social media, devices or video games interferes with physical activity, healthy eating or bedtime.
12. **Think carefully before getting your child a phone** – For parents, considering when and whether to get your child their own smartphone is a big decision. There are several factors to consider, including the child's interest in this responsibility and their past media patterns. The American Academy of Pediatrics has a tool to help guide these conversations at [PhoneReady Quiz](#)



June was Elder Abuse Awareness Month, and the U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Georgia is warning seniors to be vigilant against scams. Georgia is ranked 10th in the nation for money lost due to fraudulent activity against the elderly.

U.S. Attorney Ryan Buchanan reports that The Department of Justice has brought about 300 cases, both civil and criminal over the past year or so. In 2023 Georgia's losses exceeding \$92 million. According to the FBI, victims across the country have faced \$1.6 billion in losses from January to May 2024.

The Older Americans Act defines elder financial exploitation quite broadly as "the fraudulent or otherwise illegal, unauthorized, or improper act or process of an individual that uses the resources of an older individual for monetary, or personal benefit, profit or gain, or that results in depriving an older individual of rightful access to, or use of benefits, resources, belongings or assets."

Scammers identify the elderly as a rich environment for potential victims. Seniors are urged not to answer unknown calls and remember legitimate callers will never demand money over the phone or ask for payments in the form of gift cards or bitcoin. The FBI Internet Crime Complaint Center reported a 14% increase in elder fraud complaints since last year.

The Federal Trade Commission has published the following information to assist you in recognizing and avoiding scams:

Four signs that a caller may be a scammer:

1. Scammers **PRETEND** to be from an organization you know: They might use a real name like the IRS or Medicare. Some may pretend to be from a business you know like a utility company, tech company, or charity.
2. Scammers say there is a **PROBLEM** or a **PRIZE**: They may say you are in trouble with the government or law enforcement or that you owe money. They may tell you a family member has an emergency or that there is a virus on your computer. Some scammers will say there is a problem with one or more of your accounts and need to verify some information while others will lie and say you won money in a lottery or sweepstakes, but you have to pay a fee to get it.
3. Scammers **PRESSURE** you to act immediately: They will tell you not to hang up and some may threaten to arrest you, sue you, take away your driver's license or deport you.
4. Scammers tell you to **PAY** in a specific way such as using cryptocurrency, wire money, use a payment app or purchase gift cards and then give them the numbers on the back of the card. Some may even send you a check (that will later turn out to be fake), then tell you to deposit it and send them money.

Five ways to avoid a scam:

1. Block unwanted calls and text messages.
2. Do not give your personal or financial information in response to a request that you did not expect. Honest organizations will not call, email, or text for your personal information such as your Social Security, bank account, or credit card numbers.
3. Resist the pressure to act immediately: Honest businesses will give you time to make a decision. Anyone who pressures you to pay or give them personal information is a scammer.
4. Know how scammers tell you to pay: Never pay someone who insists that you can only pay with cryptocurrency, wire transfers, payment apps, or gift cards; and never deposit a check and send money back to someone.
5. Stop and talk to someone you trust: Before you do anything else, tell someone – a trusted friend, family member or neighbor what happened. Talking about it could help you realize it is a scam.

Sheriff Ken Henderson urges everyone to remain vigilant as these crimes continue to be on the rise. If you suspect someone is attempting to defraud you, please feel free to call the Towns County Sheriff's Office, and if you feel you are in immediate danger, please call 911.



🚗 ****Safety Tips to Prevent Hot Car Tragedies**** 🚗

With the summer heat upon us, it's vital to take extra precautions to ensure we never leave children or pets in a hot car. Here are a few tips to help prevent these dangerous situations:

1. ****Always Check the Back Seat: **** Make it a habit to open the back door every time you park, even if you think it's empty.
2. ****Use Visual Reminders: **** Place an essential item like your purse, phone, or work badge in the back seat as a reminder to check.
3. ****Keep a Routine: **** If there's a change in routine (e.g., someone else is dropping off the child), ensure there's clear communication and a follow-up check.
4. ****Teach Your Child: **** If they're old enough, teach them to remind you that they're in the car or to honk the horn if they ever find themselves alone.

Remember, a few seconds of precaution can save a life. Let's keep our loved ones safe!

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

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