

# Wilkinson...continued from page 1A

Senate Bill 184 prevents educators from being unfairly laid off due to a lack of seniority. The bill prevents bright and effective teachers from being dismissed based on how many years they have taught and encourages the evaluation of effectiveness rather than experience. SB 184 passed with a 38-15 vote and will travel to

the Governor's desk along with SB 38. The State Senate also welcomed U.S. Senator Johnny Isakson (R-Georgia) to the Senate Chamber where he encouraged senators to voice their opinions to him directly. "It was a pleasure and honor to meet Senator Isakson and I look forward to working with him in the

future," Wilkinson said. State Sen. John Wilkinson represents the 50th Senate District which includes Towns, Rabun, Habersham, Stephens, Banks, Franklin, and Hart counties along with a portion of White County. He can be reached by phone at (404) 463-1367, fax at (404) 463.1386, by e-mail at john.wilkinson@senate.ga.gov.

# Budget...continued from page 1A

\$351,436 under budget. Out of 33 budget items, 15 were under budget, nine were on target and nine were slightly over target, county records show.

The original 2011 Towns County General Fund Budget was \$9,386,241 and the final expenditures came in at \$9,034,805, or \$351,436 under the budgeted amount.

Commissioner Kendall passed the savings on to taxpayers in 2012 by reducing the millage rate and giving employees a well-deserved 30 cents per hour pay raise.

"I was pleased to be able to pass on to Towns

County citizens a tax reduction and for all employees a pay increase at a time when depressed economic conditions didn't allow other counties to do so," he said.

Commissioner Kendall said he was pleased with the final expenditure figures of the 2011 Fiscal Year, and credited a number of reasons for success in holding down spending during a continued depressed economy and declining revenues.

"The various department heads worked closely with staff in monitoring spending and adhering to conservative budgetary spending control policies,"

Commissioner Kendall said. "Also other funding acquired for ambulances, fire equipment and road projects helped take pressure off the General Fund and we were blessed with the good luck of no major emergencies requiring large capital outlay expenditures."

As depressed economic conditions continue to result in many bank foreclosures and projected declining revenues, Commissioner Kendall emphasized that the county must continue to closely adhere to its conservative spending policies during the 2012 budget year.

# Human Remains...continued from page 1A

Towns County Sheriff's Major Jeff Edge said.

About 2:30 p.m. on Monday, it was determined that searchers had recovered all of the evidence that was in the area. No evidence of foul play was found in the area. After the search concluded, the remains were sent to the GBI Crime Lab for processing. It could take more than a week before any conclusions are drawn, Major Edge said.

A forensic examination

by the GBI Crime Lab hopefully will be able to determine an identity. At the present, it's unclear if the victim is a male or female. According to Major Edge, there is no reason at this time to suspect foul play.

Major Edge said that the remains appear to have gone undiscovered for quite some time. The Towns County Herald has agreed not to divulge the exact location of where the remains were discovered to enable detectives to further in-

vestigate the discovery of human remains.

Sheriff Clinton was at the scene and wanted to thank all of the agencies involved, as well as the Red Cross, for the tremendous assistance they rendered during the search for evidence.

Visit the Herald on the Web at townscountyherald.net for updates on the case as they develop. Also, more details will be made available in next week's edition of the Towns County Herald.

# All-State...continued from page 1A

in the All-State Band Clinic and Performance. The event is scheduled for March 1st through March 3rd.

He said that his experience playing in the Towns County High School band has been one of personal fun and joy.

"There are a lot of memories here," he said. "I'm

definitely going to miss it." Guss said he wouldn't have missed his four years at Towns County High School for the world.

"It's provided me with a lot of opportunities," he said. "I've had a chance to succeed in things here where I might not have anywhere else. I've grown tre-

mendously through the activities that I've chosen to be involved in here at Towns County High School.

"You don't start thinking about anything that you'll miss until your senior year, but I'm definitely going to miss being at Towns County High School," Guss said.

# GHSA...continued from page 1A

Last year, Pace Academy did it in the Sweet 16; the year before it was Wesleyan in the Sweet 16; the year before that, Wesleyan again, this time in the Elite Eight; the year before that, they lost to Calvary Day in the Final Four.

"It's been a long time coming," Perren said, referring to a level playing field in the state playoffs.

"With real leadership, you take care of these things before they become issues," Indians Head Football Coach Kyle Langford said. "It's a problem that mushroomed, has gotten bigger and grown worse with each passing day."

"I really think it could have been taken care of long before now," Coach Langford said.

Anyone who traveled to Athens Christian School on Friday night got a pretty good idea of why small community public schools dislike their play dates against private schools.

The Towns County Boys' basketball team has struggled this year, battling size, numbers and recently, a bout with the injury bug. Their only source of new players comes from Towns County Middle School or a move-in every blue moon.

On the other hand, Class A's seventh-ranked team, the Athens Christian Eagles, did what their coach asked them to do - run up the score with an All-Star team from abroad.

The Indians, minus freshman Dallas Manus and senior Rylan Albach, who sat much of the fourth quarter after fouling out, were slaughtered like a sacrificial lamb by the good Christians from Athens.

The Eagles finished the game on a 22-0 blitz during the final 4:05 in closing out a 107-35 win with the final 19 points coming after starting guards Albach and Manus were lost on fouls as reported by basketball beat writer Jerry Kendall.

Athens Christian, as Kendall aptly puts it, is a metro area All-Star team, complete with recruits from the Bahamas and Germany.

Their Coach Ron Link gives credit to "the Lord" for bringing such gifted athletes to Athens Christian. More than likely, it has more to do with the generous tax break that well-to-do Georgians are allowed to write off by donating to their favorite private school.

Of course on the other hand, the Lady Indians had their way with the Lady Eagles. The lone exception: Lady Indians' Head Coach Jim Melton showed a ton of class playing his younger players for much of the second half as the Lady Indians cruised to a 69-42 win.

In the end, sportsmanship is what it's supposed to be about. In the fall of 2012, sportsmanship returns to Class A just as the private schools are leaving the building.

# Avita opens White County office

Avita Community Partners will open an office in Cleveland, GA, to serve adults with outpatient behavioral health needs. The office will open effective Tues., Jan. 17, and will provide counseling, peer support services and medication management.

It will be located at 129 N. Main St. The office is expected to serve 600 clients a year.

An Open House and Ribbon Cutting is planned for Fri., Jan. 27 from 11 a.m.-1 p.m. The public is welcome.

Office hours will be 8 a.m. - 5 p.m., Monday-Friday. For more information or

to schedule an appointment, please call 706-348-4060.

Avita Community Partners was formed by the 1993 Georgia State Legislature to serve persons experiencing the disabling effects of mental illness, developmental disabilities, and addictive diseases. Avita serves individuals from 13 counties in North Georgia, including Towns and Union Counties. Avita Community Partners' mission is to improve quality of life for persons with behavioral health and developmental disabilities. For more information, please visit [www.avitapartners.org](http://www.avitapartners.org). N(Jan18,11)SH

# Firewise...continued from page 1A

community leaders, planners, developers, firefighters, and others in an effort to protect people and property from the risk of wildfire, said Eric Mosley of the Georgia Forestry Commission.

The program is co-sponsored by the U.S. Forest Service, the U.S. Department of the Interior, and the National Association of State Foresters, Mosley said.

"Firewise makes people more aware of the problems they have," Mosley said. "We come in once or twice a year and to help with the chipper day. Firewise folks spent all day Saturday in here (Wood Lake Subdivision).

"The main thing is, it's all about clearing out the sensible space around the house," he said. "Firewise is information, education and awareness. It's about saving your home before a fire comes along."

Two new communities came aboard last week, Wood Lake Subdivision on Duncan Road off Crooked Creek and Leisure Woods Mobile Home

Park off GA 288.

Riley said he's already talking with Hidden Summit on GA. 288, Pinecrest Subdivision, Hightower Overlook and Brasstown Valley Resort about becoming Firewise communities.

Ann Atchison, a resident of the Wood Lake Subdivision, said Firewise brings communities closer together.

"It means safety, it means we're a clean neighborhood, we're an educated neighborhood," she said. "We're a working force, we work together to make our neighborhood just a little safer and a little less susceptible to wildfires."

"I'd like to see more neighborhoods get involved with Firewise," she said. "The bigger the width of Firewise, the lesser chance of a runaway wildfire through our mountain neighborhoods."

Diane Nelson, a resident of Leisure Woods, said Firewise is an accomplishment in her community.

"I think it helps the homeowners in our community to help to control or contain a fire if something breaks out," she said. "Firewise helps us come up with landscaping ideas of what to plant to prohibit fires from spreading."


"Firewise is almost like a mindset and it gets the community organized and involved," she said. "It helps make the community cohesive and together. It's an ongoing process once you've started; it just keeps evolving every year."

Mosley said the key principle of Firewise is education.

"Most fires in Georgia are started by human cause," he said. "With the proper education, those fire numbers can drop substantially. But we also know that fires are going to happen, so we're working on how we can protect our homes rather than saying we can stop all fires."

"That's why Firewise exists," he said.

**Extension Tips**  
by **Robert Brewer**



### Winter protection of ornamental plants

Cold damage to ornamental plants can be a problem during the winter in the Georgia landscape. This is true whether you live in the upper elevations of the mountains or in the most southern regions of the state. Regardless of where you live there are some practices you can do to maximize the chances that your prized landscape plants will make it through the winter unharmed.

During the summer months ornamental plants are actively growing and would be severely injured by even the slightest frost. Therefore during the late summer and early fall the plants must prepare themselves for winter through a process called acclimation. This process is initiated by the cooler temperatures and shorter day-lengths that naturally occur at this time of the year.

It is imperative for cold acclimation to occur in a timely fashion. If it occurs too early the growing season of the plants will be shortened, if too late they will be injured or killed by early frosts. Several factors including local weather conditions, plant selection, and how you treat the plants during the growing season can affect the timing and extent of cold acclimation of landscape plants.

### Types of damage and conditions

Cold injury can occur on all parts of the plant including fruit, stems, leaves, trunk and roots. Typically, homeowners notice the cold damage first on the leaves and stems as ice forms within the plant's cells. As plant tissue dies the leaves or stems become brownish-black and mushy. Cold hardy plants that are acclimated can often withstand this type of ice formation. Plants that are not very hardy may sustain injury to the root system and be severely damaged or killed. Sometimes this is not noticed until the plant fails to leaf out the following spring.

Windy conditions can also cause plant damage through desiccation. This is the drying out of the plant. Marginal or leaf-tip burn is characteristic of this problem. Leaves may eventually turn completely brown and defoliate. Desiccation occurs because the plant is losing more water than it absorbs.

Frost cracks are another type of injury that can occur as a result of cold temperatures.



Chipper Day is always a big day for Firewise communities in Towns County. Our community is the Firewise leader in Georgia. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

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