

Towns County Herald

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Thursday, February 26, 2009

Local Weather and Lake Levels

Thur: Cloudy 61 46
Fri: Showers 58 38
Sat: Showers 55 33
Sun: Cloudy 48 28
Mon: Cloudy 48 34
Tue: Sunny 52 39
Wed: Cloudy 52 37



Upstream Elevation Predicted 2/23/09
Lake Chatuge 1918.77
Lake Nottely 1762.50
Blue Ridge 1671.93

INDEX

18 Pages

Arrests.....14A
Church/Obits.....8A
Classifieds.....16A
Editorial.....4A
Elected officials.....4A
Legals.....17A
Sports.....10A
Television.....13A

Our sympathies



Bryson in 2008
Towns County Herald archives

The Herald would like to extend its sympathies to the family of Robert "Hoyle" Bryson, Sr., who passed away on Feb. 18. The 95-year-old Young Harris resident was a Towns County native who spent the majority of his life in these north Georgia mountains. He will be sadly missed.

Free Food Distribution

The Towns County Food Pantry will have a free food distribution Tuesday, March 3 from 2pm-6pm. Those that are in need of food assistance, please come to the distribution. The pantry asks that you enter Jack Dayton Circle on the Funworld side for a more orderly distribution. If you are unable to pick up your food, please call the food pantry at 706-896-4783 prior to the distribution day. All inquiries are confidential.

Congratulations



TCHS wrestler Tim Collie finished 4th in the state during last week's tournament

City Councils meet Mar. 3

The cities of Young Harris and Hiwassee will both hold their monthly council meetings on Tuesday, March 3. Young Harris will meet at 7 p.m. You can call them at 706-379-3171. Hiwassee will meet at 4 p.m. You can call them at 706-896-2203.

Commissioner Kendall tries to help out hurting homeowners

By David Seckinger
TOWNS COUNTY HERALD
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"I really think this is something the county needs and it is fair," said Commissioner Bill Kendall during the regular county meeting on Feb. 19.

The commissioner is trying to pass a resolution to increase the Homestead Exemption in the county to \$10,000.

The exemption is currently set at \$2,000 by the state, an amount set over 70 years ago.

Within the last few years, home values have increased dramatically, leaving the \$2,000 exemption



Towns County Home Owners Association president Charley Kraus listens while Kendall talks about the economy.

"obsolete and inadequate," in the eyes of the county. However, the state had also enacted the Homeowner's Tax Relief Grant about a decade ago, for an additional \$8,000.

See Kendall, page 2A

Two candidates for Young Harris City Council

Two candidates have qualified to run for Council Post 6 in the Young Harris Municipal Special Election to be held on March 17.

The candidates are John Kelly and Lynne Grady. The vacant seat occurred when council person Andrea Gibby stepped down to run for mayor, which she won on Nov. 4.



Kelly



Grady

Lady Indians win two in Region 8A Tournament



The Lady Indians won both games in last weekend's Region 8A Tournament.
Photo by Lowell Nicholson

By Jerry Kendall
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What a marvelous way to end a two year run of dominance in Region 8A Girls Basketball—winning a region tournament championship in impressive fashion. It had been thirty two years since the Towns County Lady Indians Varsity Bas-

ketball Team won their only prior region tournament championship, a 54-51 overtime upset win in 1977 over Buford, under Head Coach Dion Eller. The long wait for a second championship is now over as this year's edition of Lady Indians rose up and took a 56-46 victory over Social Circle last Saturday night in the Region 8A Championship game on the Lady Redskins' home court. This was quite a turnaround from just eight days earlier when Social Circle spoiled senior night for the Lady Indians on the TCHS court with a 70-37 victory. The win not only gave the Lady Indians that long

See Indians, sports page

County accepts bid by Community Bank & Trust

During the regular county meeting on Feb 19, the county accepted the highest bid on interest rates for \$3,250,000 in Certificates of Deposit from the county's general fund.

Of the three banks that bid [Community Bank & Trust, Bank of Hiwassee, and United Community Bank], the highest bid came from Community Bank & Trust.

A woman at the county meeting asked what

would happen to the CD if the bank went under? Up to \$250,000 of the county's deposit is insured by the FDIC. Therefore, the CB&T must include 110 percent collateral on the additional money. The county attorney still has to verify all of the bid conditions before the county will accept the bid by CB&T.

Community Bank & Trust bids

Type of CD	Rate	Total \$ Earned
Three 10 mo. \$500,000	2.60%	\$32,695.89
Three 12 mo. \$500,000	3.25%	\$48,750.00
One 10 mo. \$250,000	2.60%	\$5,449.32



Towns County citizen John Case, county clerk Linda Hedden, and assistant clerk Andrea Anderson read bids during the county meeting last Thursday.
Photo by David Seckinger

YHC celebrates new dorm

Special to the Herald

Young Harris College and Hardin Construction Company marked a major milestone with a "topping out" ceremony at the college's residence hall project on Monday.

The construction industry has long used "topping out" to indicate that the final piece of steel for a project is ready to be hoisted into place. The College residence hall project is not yet complete, but has reached maximum height and much of the heavy work is over.

Young Harris students, faculty and staff were invited

to sign their names on the final steel beam before it was installed, thereby becoming part of the history of this new addition to the college campus. Many local government and

See YHC, page 2A



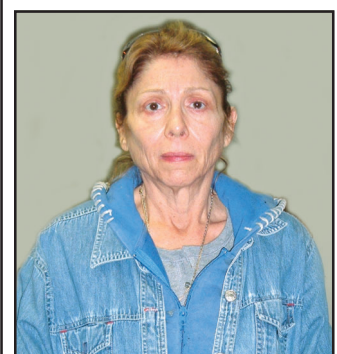
Right: Cathy Cox speaks to the crowd at YHC.

Below: Workers "top out" the new residence hall during a ceremony on Monday

Photos by Lowell Nicholson



Dangerous Dog ordinance discussed at county meeting



Gail Eaton was attacked by a pack of dogs on Feb. 13.

During the regular county meeting on Feb. 19, citizens brought up the issue of the recent dog attack that happened one week earlier.

On Feb. 13, Gail Eaton was attacked by four boxer bulldogs while walking down the road from her home. She was badly mauled by the dogs and received 18 stitches. The dogs will be euthanized after being held for ten days to see if they have rabies.

One man during the county meeting said, "It isn't the dogs' fault. It is the

owner's fault." A woman then began to ask if criminal charges could be brought against the owner of the dogs.

Kendall answered not according to the Georgia law. Sheriff Chris Clinton entered the meeting, and Kendall asked him to answer the woman's question.

Clinton said there had to be a show of malicious intent by the dogs' owner to prosecute a criminal case, but a civil case could be prosecuted.

One man said in the community he lives in, dogs running loose have been a problem for years.

Kendall said he is taking steps to hire an animal control person, to buy a van for animal control, and to build a three-pen building.

In addition, Kendall said the county will have the first reading of the new dangerous dog ordinance next month.

Responding to one citizen's question, Kendall replied the new ordinance will have some teeth in it.

Under the Gold Dome

Georgia State Representative Steven Allison



There is one issue this legislative session that is on everyone's mind at the State Capitol – the economy. Recently, several different ideas have been introduced to help turn around our struggling economy. Most of these ideas revolve around the belief that true economic recovery comes from the creation of new jobs, not temporary government programs. They seek to remove government barriers in order to create an environment in Georgia that encourages job creation.

One of the more com-

prehensive plans has come from a good friend of mine, Representative Tom Graves, who introduced the "Jobs, Opportunity, and Business Success Act of 2009." This legislation comprised of House Bills 481 and 482, will give tax credits to employers for each unemployed person they hire; suspend filing fees for one year; and eliminate several business taxes. These steps will help small businesses grow and create new jobs. The legislation is supported by House and Senate leaders as well as the National Federation of Independent Business.

Representative Ron Stephens introduced House Bill 261. This bill will give a state income tax credit of up to \$3,600 to people who buy a single-family home within six months after the bill has taken effect. The resulting increase in home sales will aid several areas important to Georgia's economy.

This week Governor Perdue signed House Bill

See Allison, page 2A

Allison ...from page 1A

143, legislation that will fully fund the Homeowner Tax Relief Grant for the current fiscal year. It is encouraging that Governor Perdue worked with the House and the Senate to fund this program and prevent local governments from issuing supplemental tax bills requiring homeowners to repay the \$200 to \$300 more in taxes. I'm happy to know that we were able to deliver on our promise to fund the Homeowners Tax Relief Grant this year.

Finally, I want to thank everyone for the well-wishes

and prayers for my wife Regina who had emergency eye surgery this week. She is recovering well and will be back on her feet soon. I apologize for the delay in returning phone calls and letters, but I'm sure you can understand trying to juggle all of my legislative responsibilities this week with a family member in the hospital. Please feel free to contact me at stephen.allison@house.ga.gov or (404) 656-0177 to share your concerns with me and please go to www.allison08.com to follow what is happening in Atlanta.

YHC ...from page 1A

school representatives were on hand to celebrate the event with college officials.

The new three-story residence hall will open in August and provide room for 200 Young Harris College students. It features 50 four-person, two-bedroom, two-bathroom suites, a multiple sound-proof music practice rooms, a 24-hour lobby, an outdoor amphitheater and patio seating, laundry facilities, as well as cable and high-speed computer connections in all rooms.

The \$16 million structure will be the first LEED Silver Certified building in this region of Georgia. According to the National Resources Defense Council: "LEED certification is the standard for measuring building sustainability. The LEED building rating system is designed to promote design and construction practices that increase profitability while reducing the negative environmental impacts of buildings and improving occupant health and well-being."

Following LEED specifications for the design and construction of the new facility, 1.1 million gallons of water will be saved each year, energy consumption will be reduced by 28% and there will be a 50-80% reduction in water heating costs, depending on the sea-

son. Blue Ridge Mountain EMC experts were helpful in designing many of the energy efficient systems in the building.

The massive project has pumped more than \$3.3 million into the local economy for roofing shingles and trusses, HVAC systems, electrical systems, site work, concrete, fire sprinkler systems, dumpsters and other project support materials and services.

Construction materials for the building include almost 85 tons of steel and more than 298,000 bricks (enough to reach from Young Harris to Blue Ridge if laid end to end.)

"It seems like only last week when we broke ground for this incredible new residence hall," said Young Harris College President Cathy Cox. "I look forward to this fall when we welcome the first residents — who will also be some of the members of our inaugural junior class at Young Harris College."

The residence hall is the first of numerous building projects planned for the Young Harris campus as the College grows into its new four-year status. Construction on a student recreation center and a campus center (combining a new library, student center and dining facilities) is slated to begin later this year.

Kendall...from page 1A

The state of Georgia is now considering eliminating the Tax Relief Grant for the 2009 tax digest to make up for recent revenue shortfalls.

To provide some relief to Georgia homeowners, the state is proposing the increase of the homestead exemption from \$2,000 to \$4,000.

However, there would still be \$6,000 less in state relief for the homeowner.

Kendall has recommended to Representative Stephen Allison and Senator Jim Butterworth the introduction of a local constitutional amendment to increase the homestead exemption within the county to \$10,000.

If the representative and senator approve the legislation, Towns County voters will get the chance to vote on it in the June election.

Most of the dozen or so people at the meeting were supportive of Kendall's proposal. However, citizen John Case asked if cutting taxes would affect essential services such as police, fire, and emergency responders.

Kendall said the county has already made a few cutbacks in overtime pay to EMT workers and cutbacks at the jail.

Kendall added that he is

watching the money closely, but revenue needs to keep coming in and the county has to stay within its budget to maintain the current level of essential services.

Kendall also suggested a tenth of a mil increase for the county, which would bring in revenue from everyone in the county rather than just the homeowners.

The citizens in the meeting had questions but seemed to be in supportive agreement of the commissioner's proposal.

Towns County Homeowners Association president Charley Kraus said the TCHA is supporting Kendall on his proposal, but the county needs to hurry if they plan to get it done this year.

Kraus said they were going to have to educate the public and work with the legislators to get the proposal quickly.

In conclusion, Kendall said he has heard from homeowners in the county who are having a hard time paying taxes. He said raising the homestead exemption will be a particular help to people in the county with smaller homes.

Some of the information in this article was submitted by the Commissioner's Office.