

Ali...continued from page 1A

nies held in the Towns County Gym last week.

Oglethorpe head coach Aaron Nester and assistant coach RyAnne Ridge were on hand to welcome her on board as a member of the Oglethorpe women's basketball program. "This experience has been really great," Ali said. "My team and my coaches have always been really good. We've always been very successful in our careers. We've worked hard for all that we achieved. It's been pretty great. I'm excited to be a part of a new program," she said. "I've always been a part of the same program and the same coaches. I'm really excited to move on to something new and something bigger.

"The coaching staff has always been very supportive in helping us (get) to where we need to be," Ali said. "They've taught us fundamentals for the past four years and helped us have a solid game all around."

Although she was the fourth member of her immediate family to play high

school basketball, Ali will be the first to participate in intercollegiate sports. Her mother, the former Cheryl Acree, played basketball at TCHS and her father, Mike Bleckley, at Rabun County High School back in the 1970s. Her brother John, who was in attendance along with Cheryl and Mike at the ceremony, was then a college capable basketball player for the Indians before graduating in 2010 but he did not continue onto a collegiate career.

Bleckley finished her senior season with 320 points for a 10.7 points per game scoring average on a well balanced team with top players often spending extended periods of time on the bench in the less competitive games. She compiled a 56.8 free throw percentage on 50-88 accuracy at the foul line, including seven for ten in five post season tournament games. She sank thirty eight treys and contributed 4.5 rebounds, 3.6 assists, 0.6 blocked shots, and 2.5 steals per game during her senior season.

MercyMe...continued from page 1A

Opening acts included 19 year old Moriah Peters of Southern California. Peters is an American contemporary Christian singer-songwriter born and raised in Chino, California. In 2012, Peters released the album entitled 'I Choose Jesus,' her first full length studio album. Peters started writing songs at the age of 13 and has played the guitar since she was very young. She dedicated herself to the leadership of God at the age of 14 and can still remember her heart's genuine prayer of "God, I just want to be used by you." She challenged the youth at the concert by saying, "I want you to choose to be bold."

Peters was followed by another contemporary Christian singer, Chris August. August began recording as a secular musician before switching to Christian music. His song 'Starry Night' reached No. 1 in the Billboard Christian Songs chart in 2010-11. He was nominated at the 2011 'Dove Awards' in five categories, including Best New Artist and Song of the Year.

Young Harris College students, Tara Shiver and Jerilyn Okendo, described August as "very quirky and down to earth." Shiver also went on to say that he was "very personable to the audience...he talks to them about personal experiences...very faith based in his performance."

These young ladies are members of Phi Alpha Phi Sorority at YHC and they had the opportunity, along with several other YHC students including the Alpha Omega Fraternity, to "Meet & Greet" with August and MercyMe before the concert began. This was arranged by Thomas Morgan, Promoter and Nyoka Brooks, Announcer and Promoter for V 91.5 radio station out of Cumming, Georgia. Brooks exceed the concert as well.

Finally, the moment all had been waiting for...MercyMe stepped out on stage to the absolute delight and awe of the many fans who had sat so patiently just for the opportunity to hear the incredible faith-based, inspirational sound of this American Christian rock band. The audience was standing as they raised their

hands and sang along in praise and worship. MercyMe, founded in Greenville, Texas, is made up of the following: vocalist Bart Millard, keyboardist James Bryson, percussionist Robby Shaffer, bassist Nathan Cochran, and guitarists Michael Scheuchzer and Barry Graul.

The band formed in 1994 and released 6 independent albums prior to signing with INO Records in 2001. The group first gained mainstream recognition with the hit song, 'I Can Only Imagine' which took their debut album, "Almost There" to 'double platinum' level. Since then, the group has released 6 additional studio albums (four of which have been certified gold) and a greatest hits album, '10.' MercyMe has had "13 consecutive top 5 singles on the 'Billboard Christian Songs' chart, with 7 of them reaching number 1." MercyMe have won eight Dove Awards and have had many Grammy Award nominations.

The TCH staff had the opportunity to talk with a youth group out of Ellijay. They are members of the Northcutt Baptist Church. Pastor Chris Berry and Youth Leader, Kevin Johnson told us that this group of 13 has only been together for "6 or 7 weeks." They were very excited to have the opportunity to see MercyMe in concert. This was their first concert ever as a youth group. Pastor Berry described the group as "excitingly growing...not only numerically, but spiritually as well."

We also had the pleasure of talking with brothers Josh and Tyler Worley of Hayesville, NC. They were there with the Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church group. When speaking of Mercy Me, Josh said, "I listen to them all the time...they are one of my favorite groups...second only to Casting Crowns." This is Josh and Tyler's first time at a Christian concert and they were very excited to be there and see Moriah Peters and Mercy Me in person.

It was refreshing to see the huge turnout of young people on a Saturday night to hear contemporary Christian music.

BOE...continued from page 1A

funding opportunities, continuing to operate on a reduced calendar and decreasing select benefit options provided by the system. Preliminary estimates show these steps alone should save the system over \$500,000.

Expecting little to no relief from state or federal sources, the board has looked within to reorganize and consolidate. "The board will continue to work diligently to find additional ways to cut expenses, conserve funds and preserve the integrity of the education we offer to our students," says member Emily Phillips. Vice Chairman Michael Anderson adds, "The cuts have not been easy to face. We

have been fortunate to put off making such decisions until now. Many other systems in our area have already waded through making such anguishing decisions."

Superintendent Melissa Williams states, "Even though we continue to see that our State revenue is rebounding, very little relief is being pushed down to local school systems. It is a challenge to explore every avenue possible to maximize our revenue and cut our expenses without jeopardizing the instructional opportunities we make available to our students. We appreciate the encouragement and support the community continues to provide for us."

Granddaddy...continued from page 1A

North Georgia Mountains – are engrained in his life today.

Tommy is a minor celebrity himself, serving as the lead vocals and lead guitar for Nashville-based Waymore's Outlaws, the band that backed up Country Music legend Waylon Jennings during his heyday.

While on tour in Texas last March, he was talking with a friend from West Texas about moonshine. Tommy remembered the legend of his grandfather's moonshining days. He mentioned to the friend that his grandfather used to be a legendary moonshiner in the North Georgia Mountains.

"Jack said, 'really?' Can you get your hands on that recipe? You can make moonshine legally today," Tommy said. "I talked to Momma and my uncle, did some digging and came up with the recipe."

With the family's blessing, Tommy is moving forward with producing *GrandDaddy Mimm's Authentic Corn Whiskey*, using the same recipe and the same simple ingredients with all of the taste and tradition enjoyed by mountain folk, celebrities and high-powered politicians that began 80 years ago.

On Jan. 25, Townsend announced his partnership with Georgia Distilling Company Inc. in Milledgeville to recreate and market his grandfather's original moonshine recipes legally for the first time.

Dubbed *Granddaddy*

Mimm's Authentic Corn Whiskey, and Peach and Apple brandies, these mountain spirits will be produced on stills using the Jack McClure design, and built in Georgia using his secret family recipe originated in Towns County.

The back label on the whiskey bottle urges those who partake of these spirits to "please drink responsibly and don't forget to tithe on Sunday."

Granddaddy Mimm wouldn't have it any other way. Another line of the Mimm product is *Maggie Moon*, named after Tommy's youngest, and offers a sweeter brand geared toward the ladies.

The spirits will be on the shelves sometime in June.

"I guess the message that I'd really like to get out there is, a lot of people are so stereotypical of moonshiners," Tommy said. "They think they're crazy and they're mean."

"The stories that have been handed down through the years don't reflect that about Granddaddy Mimm. He was respected, some people hated him," Tommy said. "But, the most intriguing aspect about Granddaddy Mimm, with the money he made from moonshining, he made sure the people in Towns and Union counties who didn't have anything had something."

"He made sure a lot of folks had food on the table, he made sure their kids had clothes and shoes," Tommy said. "He was a spiritual man,

maybe not religious, but he looked after the churches. He paved the driveway at old Brasstown Church. He helped people with his money.

"Some of those people that he helped were Georgia politicians," Tommy said with a smile. "That moonshine money also kept a lot of people in Towns and Union counties from starving to death."

Tommy sees the new line of whiskey as a tribute to his grandfather.

"I've always admired the outlaws; people who colored outside the lines," Tommy said. "I guess that's what intrigued me about Waylon Jennings. I've always compared my grandfather and Waylon."

"No one ever told my grandfather what to do, people were always coming to him for advice," Tommy said. "Waylon was kind of the same way."

Tommy grew up in Union County's Owtown community dreaming of becoming a Country Music singer. When he wasn't picking a guitar or writing songs, he was logging with his father Roy Townsend.

A trip with his parents to Lanierland's Concerts in the Country as a young boy changed his life forever.

Waylon Jennings and the Waylors were performing. Tommy's Momma, Ida, talked to a member of Waylon's security team (an actual Hell's Angel member) about getting Tommy backstage to meet

Waylon and getting a picture with the legendary performer.

The security team member told Ida that he didn't think that would be a problem. Waylon, you see was big on visiting with his younger fans and eager to make their day with a photo opportunity.

That chance meeting turned into a lifetime friendship between Tommy and Waylon. Tommy and his now mentor, Waylon Jennings would collaborate on music the rest of Waylon's days.

The two collaborated several times over the remaining years of Waylon's life.

Waylon played and sang harmony on some tracks, and even co-produced a full album for Tommy with the Waylors' bass player, Jerry "Jigger" Bridges.

Waylon and Jigger took Tommy under their wings, recording in the studio, and occasionally, appearing with him out on the road.

Tommy and his wife Christy and their two children, Megan and Maggie, moved to Nashville in 1995 and still live there today.

"About three years ago, the band started talking about touring again. They called me and asked if I'd be the front man," he said. "I told them 'sure, I'd love to.' The last three years have been the most fun I've ever experienced in the music business."

Somewhere up there, Granddaddy Mimm and Waylon are sharing a smile.

Deputies...continued from page 1A

County Sheriff's Office for the past 21 months. She and her husband, Bruce, have a son, Cody, and a daughter, Michaela, and a granddaughter, McKenna. Burch's interests include, "watching sports, reading, and playing the piano."

Officer Burch is responsible for booking and processing of inmates, as well as overall supervision of the inmate population, and overseeing daily operations.

Lt. James Baldwin stated that, "Amy has a condo attitude and works very well with her co-workers. She is willing to do anything that is asked of her."

Officer Scott Farist has been with the Towns County Sheriff's Office for 24 years. He has been employed through 4 different administrations and served previously in the capacity as Sergeant. Farist's duties include booking and processing of inmates, overseeing day to day operations, and overall supervision of the inmate population.

Farist enjoys art and is an avid collector of rare comic



Amy Burch

books. He enjoys spending quiet time at home with Connie and their 3 dogs.

Lt. James Baldwin stated that "Officer Farist is a dependable and professional officer. He is very consistent in his duties and interactions with others. He has a calming effect on the inmate population."

Cory Ingram, Certification Manager, has been with the Towns County Sheriff's Office since February 2011. Ingram, a native of Towns County, was in the 75th Ranger Regiment at Hunter Army Airfield in Savannah, GA for 6 years. He has had "3 deployments to Iraq and 3 to Afghanistan." He came to work with the TCSO right out of the military.



Scott Farist

Chief Deputy, Jeff Edge, when asked about Ingram stated, "Any time anyone applies for a job coming out of the military from a highly regard unit such as the Rangers, we take a strong look at them and want to include them in our organization." Edge also went on to say that, "Cory is a highly motivated individual based on that information alone, and after meeting him during the interview, I was very impressed with his organizational skills and professional attitude. Since coming to the TCSO, he has proven that first impression to be correct. We could not have chosen a better person for that job. We look



Cory Ingram

forward to him furthering his training and continuing his career with the TCSO in a greater capacity. We are honored to serve with a person who has served his country in such an admirable way and is now serving Towns County with that same enthusiasm and dedication."

Ingram's duties as Certification Manager is to provide documentation to GPAC (Georgia Police Accreditation Coalition) that the TCSO is in compliance with nationally accepted standards.

Ingram has 3 children: Grant (7), Roxie (5), and Reese (2). He is engaged to Rheanna Nicholson. They plan to be married on August 11th.

Garden...continued from page 1A

are used for upkeep of the garden and purchasing new plants.

Hamilton Gardens is a truly enchanted spot, boasting the largest collection of rhododendron in the state of Georgia. You can stroll tranquil pine bark trails as they wind through lush foliage, take in the stunning views of Lake Chatuge and the amazing countryside, including the majestic rise of Brasstown Bald, Georgia's highest peak.

The Gardens were graciously donated to the Georgia Mountain Fair, Inc. in 1982 by Fred and Hazel Hamilton. More than 1,000 plants were relocated to their present site.

Recently the Hamilton Gardens was featured in 'Southern Living Magazine'. While everyday is a special event at Hamilton Gardens, peak viewing season usually occurs the last week in April through late May. An entrance fee of \$3 is charged during this blooming period. You can also purchase a Season Pass for only \$10. The Gardens are open year round. All proceeds help support the gardens. Guided walking and shuttle tours are available daily from 9am-3pm. Handicapped tours (tour on a golf cart) are also available for a fee of \$5. A Visitor's Guide, complete with

trail map and mileage, is available.

Opportunities exist to help preserve and maintain the gardens. You can help with the care and improvement of this garden legacy by funding specific projects such as Memorial Walls, Memorial Benches and plaques, and additional irrigation and replanting of some areas. Donations are also accepted. To make a contribution contact the Georgia Mountain Fair staff @ 706-896-4191 or see a Towns County Lion Club member. There are also donation boxes within the Gardens.

Hilda Thomason, General Manager of the Georgia Moun-

tain Fairgrounds, stated that she "would like to say a big thank you to Commissioner Kendall for his support of the gardens." She would also like to recognize Jerry Jenkins, volunteer Lion's Club member for selling plants for them and to all the Lion's Club members for volunteering to take up money.

We would be very much in remiss if we did not recognize Paul Hanson, Curator of the garden. He is in charge of promotion, working in the gardens, care taking, trail maintenance, coordinating volunteers, and taking care of the plants.

Colt Ford...continued from page 1A

This was their first visit to Anderson Music Hall.

Ford went one-on-one with the Towns County Herald. He described himself as "a regular old boy from Athens, Georgia."

He says he "believes in God, family, friends, America, and hard work." He said he "likes to be a role model for country kids from ages 8-80."

He tries to instill in them that they need to be respectful and take pride in themselves. He reminds them to "say yes ma'am, yes sir, and to pull up their pants." He opens each show by playing the National Anthem.

Ford had checked out several venues before decid-

ing to bring his 'style of music' to the Anderson Music Hall. Some may consider the Academy of Country Music Award nominee's style of rhythmic sing-speak to be 'rural rap', Ford will tell you that he considers himself to be "a country music singer" and what he does "has been a part of country music for ages."

Average Joes Entertainment explains Ford's style in the following way.

"It's in Hank William Sr.'s Kaw-liga' and in the story songs of Johnny Cash...the double-talking jive of Jerry Reed...the wild wordplay of Charlie Daniels...and in Jason Aldean's hit single 'Dirt Road Anthem'...a song co-written

and originally recorded by Ford."

"I'm a country artist and I want people to know how much I genuinely respect this music and my fans," he said.

When Ford finally hit the stage, it was obvious that the fans loved him and his music, whatever style they may consider it to be. They went wild! They were dancing, waving their arms, and singing along with him. He said that "I want to reach fans from 8-80," and he certainly did that as there were many generational gaps between fans. They shared one common thread...they were all huge fans of Colt Ford and his accompanying bands.

One of the Colt's fans was 14-year-old Madison Hart of Blairsville. She is a huge fan of Ford and coming to see him perform was her birthday gift.

She said she was very excited when she found out he was coming to Hiwassee. She was even more excited when she got to have her picture taken with him and got him to autograph the shirt she was wearing. She said that 'Chicken and Biscuits' is her favorite Colt Ford song.

Sarah Darnell and Josh Thomas of Blue Ridge are also Ford fans. This was Josh's "first time experiencing a concert at the Anderson Music Hall. Wow! Great first time and looking forward to future visits."

Mountain Home Show Friday, Saturday

The 15th Annual Mountain Home Show at North Georgia Technical College begins Friday from 2 p.m. to 7 p.m.

The two-day event also is scheduled for Saturday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Come see ideas for your home. We have some

of the best companies in our show this year. The economy is just beginning to recover, and our show will be better than ever with many new exhibitors. When you see their beautiful exhibits, you will know they are proud of what they do.

Learn how to remodel

and get more for less; learn how to save the most energy for the least cost; generate ideas for your mountain home; and attend exhibits sponsored by local businesses.

One community run trade show helps local busi-

nesses share the cost of advertising. Your attendance is a way of helping support the local construction industry which employs your neighbors.

Experience the Mountain Home Show, you'll be glad you did.