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anniversary of the bank's existence with a Money Grab for customers. The special day included a hot dog social, complete with a plethora of cookies and free door prizes.

During football season, the bank wrote a check for more than \$700 to the Towns County Indians' football team (\$110 for each touchdown) after the Indians came from behind to upend rival Glascock County, 47-45 in overtime.

They also awarded \$110 to the lucky holder of the CB&T football program during the game against Glascock.

When the Towns County Wrestling team needed money for hotel fair to beat a snow storm prior to the Area Wrestling Tournament in Atlanta to determine which teams went to state, it was CB&T Hiawasse who stepped up to the plate, along with other local businesses and civic

leaders to make sure it happened.

"Please know that I have enjoyed working with you and hope to continue serving as your banker," Shope wrote. "I will be transferring to our Clayton office and will be available to assist you through this transition."

For Hiawasse customers with questions for Shope, call (888) 847-2265.

Open House...continued from page 1A

proposals for the 8.3-mile widening project. Right-of-way funding for the federal/state project is expected to be available in 2014, with construction likely to begin in 2017.

At a Stakeholders meeting in March at Young Harris College, GDOT officials told residents and government officials that the project is not I-3. They also shared that the project is funded 80 percent by the federal government.

Most importantly, they assured the crowd that the project is not etched in stone.

Robert Mahoney, district preconstruction engineer, told the group meeting at Young Harris College that the federal government has the final say about the project.

"They own the environmental study," Mahoney said. "The environmental study will predetermine the scope of this project."

That's because if one penny of federal money is spent on a road project, the federal government has the final say, he said.

Mahoney told the group of more than 60 people gathered in the Goolsby Building at Young Harris College that the project was necessary to handle the growth in traffic from Blairsville through Young Harris for the next 20 years.

The Needs Analysis

for the proposed project will be formed during Thursday's informal open house meeting, GDOT Communications Officer for District One, Teri Pope said.

Traffic studies and counts will be available at the public information hearings, Pope said.

"We urge the public to attend these meetings," Pope said. "Public input is one third of the final equation."

"The plans in Union County follow the existing roadway and widen the existing footprint," Mahoney said. "Through our meetings with local officials, we discovered the need to review all possible options in Young Harris. We will be sharing four expansion options through or around Young Harris to increase capacity on (Georgia) 515. We want to include the community in the process now so we incorporate your ideas into the plan."

Part of the process of vetting through the community includes the "no build" option, which leaves the existing roadway infrastructure in place without any improvements, Mahoney said.

Possible alternatives in or around Young Harris include a two-lane bypass around the north side of the city to minimize impacts to the downtown area and the Young Harris College campus.

Other alternatives in-

clude two-lane bypass through the northern part of the Young Harris City Limits, a two-lane bypass through the center of the Young Harris City Limits and a four-lane divided roadway through Young Harris along the existing path of Georgia 515.

Anyone unable to attend the public information open house may send comments on the project to Glenn Bowman, State Environmental Administrator, Georgia DOT, 600 West Peachtree Street, 16th Floor, Atlanta, Georgia 30308.

All comments will be considered in the development of the final project design and must be received by May 19.

After the open house meetings, plans and handouts can be viewed at the GDOT Area Office located at 942 Albert Reid Road in Cleveland or at the GDOT District Office located at 2505 Athens Highway, in Gainesville.

The plans will be available on the DOT website after the open house meetings at www.dot.ga.gov.

On the home page, choose *Information Center* then *Public Outreach* and select the project's county and choose *Go*. A list of active GDOT projects in that county will appear. Select the project to view.

NGN makes advances

The backbone of the North Georgia Network is taking shape.

Cable crews working in Rabun, Towns, Union and White counties have installed more than 35 miles of fiber optic cable along the 260-mile core of the multi-county fiber optic network.

While some connections for large bandwidth users will be made directly on the core, several hundred miles of lateral lines will be built out from the core, as well, to reach thousands of public and community institutions, businesses and homes.

Additional core construction will take place in Lumpkin, Dawson, Habersham and Forsyth counties.

The North Georgia Network's core is scheduled for completion in late fall. It is expected to deliver broad-

band speeds as fast as anywhere in the world.

The 800-mile fiber optic network is scheduled for completion in November 2012.

The North Georgia Network is a non-profit company that is building and managing a fiber optic network to deliver broadband access to thousands of households, businesses and community institutions, including public schools, universities, hospitals and government facilities, in a rural, eight-county region of North Georgia.

This initiative was chartered by economic development professionals in Lumpkin, Dawson, Union, White and Forsyth counties, together with Blue Ridge Mountain EMC, Habersham EMC and North Georgia College & State University, to stimulate economic growth by improving the

broadband infrastructure in the North Georgia region.

Vice President Joe Biden came to Dawsonville in December 2009 to announce that North Georgia Network Cooperative had been awarded \$33.5 million in federal stimulus funds to construct the ultra-high speed fiber optic trunk line network.

Biden's announcement kicked off \$7.2 billion in Recovery Act broadband grant and loan programs to bring high-speed Internet to communities that currently have little or no access to the technology.

The ultra high-speed fiber optic cable line will connect counties that include Towns, Union, Dawson, Habersham, Lumpkin, Rabun and White.

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Park.

The idea is to make the newest pioneer project at the Fairgrounds a focal point of the entire facility for tourists.

The project is probably a month away from completion, Thomason said. The park is part of the Pioneer Village, located behind the general store. It's located between the lower level and the Antique Farm Exhibit.

"It's a really beautiful piece of property that has not been used," she said. "It'll be exciting for folks to come by and have lunch in that park and sit in the shade."

A sneak peek is scheduled for July 14 during the Towns County Chamber of Commerce's Business After Hours from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m., Thomason said.

"We'll do the ribbon cutting that day," Thomason said. "We'll have some refreshments for everyone. It's right before the Georgia Mountain Fair opens and it will give folks an opportunity to enjoy all the hard work and effort that's gone into this project."

The park's design, which includes walking trails, a picnic area, an outdoor amphitheater, a gorgeous fountain and panoramic native plant life, was the brainstrom of The Plant Stand's Catherine Hansen.

"We've already have

some groups anxious to perform in the outdoor amphitheater," Thomason said. "The closer we get, the more the excitement builds."

For more than a year, Hansen's day-to-day effort has been to run her professional business as a landscape designer, while at the same time, work on the Pioneer Park project.

Add that in with being a mommy and there's not enough hours in the day, Hansen said.

"The Fairgrounds has been missing a place to kind of hangout the last few years," Hansen said. "In other words, if you go to a concession stand and buy something, there were always some little benches set up to accommodate folks while they enjoyed their snacks."

"This is literally a park with benches and picnic tables in it. It has an outdoor stage with a complete sound system," she said. "We've got a water wheel, a giant fountain, two pioneer houses, trails. I could go on."

"I think what Anderson-Paris Pioneer Park will be, is a place to remember what Elois and Dick have really meant to this community, while at the same time, providing a little enjoyment for folks who come to visit the Fairgrounds."

"It gives the Fair-

grounds a revived spark of interest to three acres that literally were not being used for anything constructive," she said. "Now, people who visit the Fairgrounds can thrive and enjoy a mountain atmosphere without having to leave the Fairgrounds."

Last week Hansen was joined by Cub Scout Pack 407, who wanted to make a difference and be a part of something historic, in the development of Anderson-Paris Pioneer Park. They dug in the dirt, they planted hydrangeas, dogwoods, sycamores and locust trees.

The dozen Cub Scouts even attained a community service badge for their public service efforts at the soon-to-be completed park.

"You know, this group of Scouts is really dedicated," Hansen said. "We've barely got enough for a troop, but the ones that are in that group, give it everything they have."

"I can't say enough about Pack 407," she said. "They are a true inspiration to this community."

Thomason agreed. "They worked their hearts out," Thomason said. "They did a wonderful job. They were excited too, because it was a project for them. I can't say enough good things about the Cub Scouts."

Rabies Clinic...continued from page 1A

The Countywide Rabies Clinic will be available in six locations, including Lake Chatuge Animal Hospital from 9 a.m. to noon. Other locations include Towns County High School from 10 a.m. to noon and 1 p.m. to 3 p.m., Young Harris Elementary 10 a.m. to noon, Downtown Hiawasse Square from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Hiawasse Animal Hospital from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. and the Towns County Public Health Building from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.

Licensed veterinarians will be available at each location.

Rabies is a viral infection transmitted in the saliva of infected animals. The virus enters the central nervous system of the host mammal causing inflammation of the brain that is almost always fatal.

Although all species of mammals can get the rabies virus, only a few species store the virus in their bodies and are transmitters of

the disease.

The most common carriers in the United States are raccoons, rabbits, skunks, bobcats, coyotes, foxes, rodents and bats. That's why it's easy to see how the disease can spread from one area to another.

The Countywide Rabies Clinic is a service to the county and has been an annual ritual for many years as local vets work together to make local domestic animals safe from the dangers of rabies.

Georgia law requires that all domestic cats and dogs be vaccinated. If you have a dog or cat that is bit or scratched or in a fight with a feral animal and that pet isn't vaccinated, about the only way to tell that they've got rabies is pen them up and wait and see if they're going to act like Old Yeller, or put them down and have them tested.

Either way, it's a tough situation. The best way to know what's going on is to have your pets vaccinated

annually.

As the rights of summer approach, more and more feral animals will be diagnosed with rabies. It's not going to get any better. Each year health experts are seeing more and more rabies cases. That's what makes the annual Rabies Clinic that much more important.

Last year, pet owners came out in droves to get their pets vaccinated.

With rabid animals lining the edges of the wood line, the Countywide Rabies Clinic is essential to the health of pets and owners alike in Towns County.

The risk of rabies is imminent and the only way to protect the community is to get dogs and cats vaccinated. Through the rabies clinic and local vets, precautions are being taken to keep the community safe from rabid animals.

For more details about the Countywide Rabies Clinic, call (706) 896-8873.

YHC...continued from page 1A

from the senior class, and this confidence pushed me to do my best. Through the transition, we have all grown into mature, confident students ready to take our next steps."

During her studies, Dyer worked on research projects related to the dental field. She recently presented her findings regarding fractures and microshrinkage in fillings at the Georgia Academy of Science Annual Meeting at Gainesville State College in Watkinsville.

She plans on remaining an active alumna and returning to the North Georgia Mountains to work alongside her father, Dr. Ronnie Dyer, at his private practice in Blairsville.

"It means a lot to be one of the seniors who are setting a new standard for YHC students," Dyer said. "I am grateful for the many opportunities that this College has given me, and it means so much to me to be able to represent the College."

For most of the College's 125-year history, Young Harris College only offered associate degrees for completing two years of study within a certain program. That changed in December 2008 when the College achieved four-year status and began to offer its first four-year programs.

On Saturday, 132 students will participate in the graduation ceremony at the Young Harris College Recreation and Fitness Center. Of those, 40 will graduate with a bachelor's degree in

English, business and public policy, biology, music and musical theatre, which were among the first four-year programs instituted at the College two years ago.

In August 2010, Young Harris College broke all previous enrollment records with the largest fall enrollment in the College's history of 819 students on campus. The College plans to increase enrollment to 1,200 over the next few years.

To accommodate the anticipated rise in admissions in conjunction with its growth, the College has developed a 10-year master plan to expand its facilities. Many new building projects recently have been completed, including a 200-bed LEED-certified residence hall and the 57,000-square-foot Recreation and Fitness Center that features a state-of-the-art 1,100-seat, NCAA-regulation arena that serves as the new home of Mountain Lions basketball. The college's development plan also calls for a 148-bed "upperclassmen village," as well as a 125,000-square-foot campus center that will house a new dining hall, student center and library.

Young Harris College has cultivated a number of successful alumni over its 125-year history, including Georgia Speaker of the House David Ralston, '74, Waffle House co-founder Tom Forkner, '37, Grammy-winning country music sensation Trisha

Yearwood, '84, Baltimore Orioles first-round draft pick Nick Markakis, '03, and distinguished politician Zell Miller.

Miller was born in Young Harris, Ga., and attended Young Harris College before serving in the U.S. Marine Corps from 1953-1956. He continued his studies at the University of Georgia where he earned a bachelor's degree in political science and a master's degree in history.

His political career began in 1959 when he was elected mayor of Young Harris. In 1960, Miller was elected to the Georgia State Senate. During his two terms there, Miller also served as a professor of history and political science at Young Harris College.

Elected governor of Georgia in 1990, Miller was a strong advocate of education and is credited with making enormous improvements in the educational system of the state. Since leaving the governor's office in 1999, Miller has taught at Young Harris College, Emory University and the University of Georgia.

Miller currently resides in Young Harris with his wife, Shirley, '54. He serves as distinguished visiting professor of history and public policy at Young Harris College.

A limited number of tickets are available to the general public through the Office of the Registrar. Call (706) 379-5125 for more information.

Ramp Fest...continued from page 1A

County," Wyman said.

Between the square dancing, horseshoe tosses, and the large, cast iron skillets filled with ramps and other ingredients, people in attendance seemed to just be having a good time. The event also featured a Corn Hole competition.

The festival wasn't short on action. It was a time that featured camaraderie mixed with good old fashioned mountain flair.

A lack of knowledge over the origins of a ramp, or wild leek, was a common reply by those who attended the annual celebration.

Ramps are easily recognized by the distinct wild onion-like smell, an odor that can be confused with hybrid onions and mountain garlic.

ramps are most commonly fried with potatoes in bacon grease or scrambled with eggs and served with bacon, soup beans, coleslaw and cornbread.

Wild leeks or ramps, however, are quite adaptable to a variety of recipes; they can be used just like onions and garlic in most any recipe and also can be used in soups, salads, sandwiches and others delicacies.

The only drawback for folks with an affection for ramps: the powerful "leek odor" stays with one for days.

According to Wyman, the mountain folk of Appalachia have long celebrated spring with the arrival of the ramps, believing the herb to have great power as a tonic to ward off many ailments of departed winter.

And interestingly enough, ramps can also be pickled, or used in soups and other foods in place of onions and garlic.

Ramp festivals are common place in Southern Appalachia culture, according to Wyman.

Festivities usually include buck dancing, square dancing, clogging, a duck race, Corn Hole competitions, tossing horseshoes, and of course, cooking ramps.

"We've had terrific weather for this weekend considering what we've had this past week (violent storms)," Wyman said. "Today, we've had a nice crowd and we hope as time passes and this festival continues, the number of interested persons grows in the years to come."