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about," she said. "I would hate to say either way because I understand both sides. It's a tough call. I don't think it warrants a five-lane."

Her son Greg Howell, of Atlanta, said he doesn't feel that improvements are necessary.

"I'm not sure about now, or even the next 15-20 years," he said. "I really don't think traffic is that heavy, but I think it's going to happen either way. I feel like it's on someone's agenda and they're going to make sure it gets done."

"I know of many, many other places in the state that have much bigger needs than Young Harris," he said. "I want good things to happen to the county, but for the sake of building it, I don't think this road is the answer."

"There are many other places in the state that have much more serious traffic issues to deal with than right here," he said. "Especially in these economic times. I'm not a big fan of putting a super highway through the middle of Young Harris."

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.

On Thursday, GDOT engineers brought ideas of various options to the table based on feedback from the stakeholder meetings in December 2010 and March.

Mahoney said the project might not happen for years to come.

"We still have to do all the engineering required to tweak it as much as possible to reduce impact as much as possible," he said. "It may come down that this project because of the public comment gets shifted out further."

"It could be delayed for years, it all depends on what the comments are, what the input will be from the federal highway administration and also from our upper management at the department," he said. "We're going to look at all

the factors and try to come up with the minimal impact; we're mandated through the federal environmental study to do all that."

Anyone who was 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.

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 are available on the GDOT Web site 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.

YHC...continued from page 1

weren't even mentioned in my introduction today.

"Rejection is why you're here today," he said, referring to YHC President Cathy Cox's defeat in the Democratic Primary for Governor in 2006. "This woman rejected that rejection (became YHC's 21st president) and is primarily, largely responsible for you being in this building, receiving these impressive degrees."

"Without her, this event would have never been taken place," Miller said.

Miller told the graduates that a four-year degree is a major personal accomplishment, but, it doesn't bring any guarantees.

"Less than 28 percent of adult Georgians have a four-year degree," he said. "But in this day and time, even with a four-year degree, you're not promised a rose garden. Even with a degree, there will be adversity and disappointments."

"Dare I say it, even rejection," he said. "As you go through life, don't ever assume a door is closed until you push on it. And never assume that a door closed today will be a door closed tomorrow."

Doors haven't always

been open for Miller. He lost three elections, two attempts to become a member of the U.S. House of Representatives and one run at the United States Senate seat of incumbent Herman Talmadge.

However, the longest serving Lieutenant Governor in the history of Georgia, Miller, shrugged off those three defeats.

Miller served as the state's second in command from 1975 to 1991, when he became Georgia's 79th Governor. He served two terms, founded the HOPE Scholarship funded by a portion of the state's lottery proceeds and cut the sales tax on groceries statewide.

"Congratulations, God Bless You and always remember these six letters, 'YHC IOU,'" Miller said.

President Cox told the graduates just how much Zell Miller means to the college and to her personally.

"Zell Miller is one of the greatest elected officials, ever in America," President Cox said. "He was once referred to as the Greatest Governor in America. He made education a priority, removed the sales tax from groceries."

"He has been a role

model for me," she said.

With that, President Cox asked Miller to approach the podium once more. She honored him with the honorary degree of Doctor of Public Service.

She also presented Matthew Fredrick Kammerer, the college's three-time Student Government president with the first Zell B. Miller Leadership Award.

Another friend and personal inspiration for President Cox is United Community Bank CEO Jimmy Talent, a member of the YHC Class of 1970.

She bestowed him with the President's Medallion, an honor bestowed upon persons who have made extraordinary contributions to the college. It's the highest honor given by the college.

Cox said that Tallent was the one person who believed in Young Harris College's plan to grow into a four-year college. She said that Tallent and United Community Bank stood beside the college and helped make four-year degrees at the school a reality.

"Jimmy Tallent stepped up to the plate," she said. "He helped make it all come together."

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"We've been doing this ever since we became a part of United," Miller said. "People have come to expect it, talk about it for weeks prior to the event and can't wait to plant those tomato plants."

Given the continued downturned economy, those plants could have a huge economic impact locally.

Those plants, with an anticipated yield of 34 tomatoes each, would yield approximately 476,000 tomatoes. That translates into about 2 million 'mater' sandwiches.

However, it's unclear how many quarts of mayonnaise and loaves of bread would be needed to complete the Appalachian delicacy.

One thing is for certain, UCB attracted a crowd at its Hiwassee branch on the day traditionally known as Arbor Day in Georgia.

The last brick of tomato plants was handed out around 3:50 p.m., but that didn't stop locals from sticking around. There were still plenty of Cokes, hot dogs and popcorn to go around.

Families brought their small children, who toured the inside of the bank's facility.

The tiny ones took

home colorful United Community Bank balloons and a smile for their efforts. They also were privy to a bit of the sweet stuff as the UCB tellers couldn't resist the smiles on their faces.

All-in-all, it truly was a grand day to be in Hiwassee.

"It's probably the most important holiday of the year besides Christmas," said UCB's Cheryl Barrett. "As a staff, we just get excited about this event. Everyone gets so hyped up. We're all tired when it's over, but it's really like a day of fun. It's an opportunity to meet a whole lot of people."

For Holloway, helping out on Tomato Day as a member of the Junior Board of Directors has been an incredible experience, he said.

"As a member of the Junior Board of Directors, I not only notice the needs of the community, but I find ways that I can help the community and give back," he said. "Experience like this helps you grow as a person."

Holloway wants to be a lawyer. He sees his experience helping his community as a member of UCB's Junior Board of Directors as a

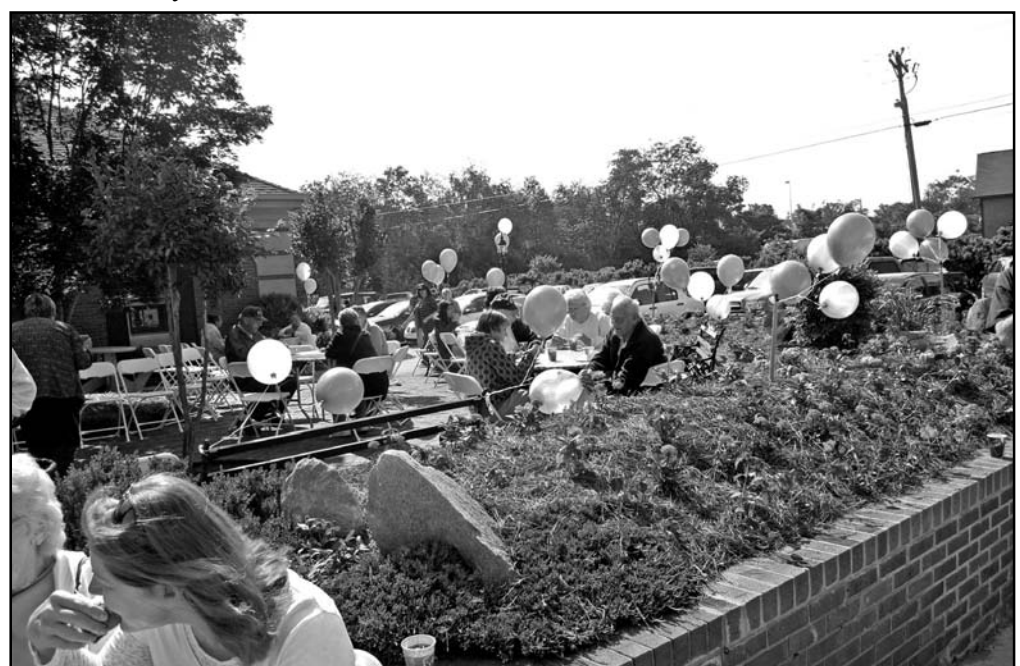
positive experience.

"Definitely," he said. "That's part of the well-rounded experience that colleges look at when you're applying to get into school. It's definitely a character builder."

Barrett said this year's event was the biggest and the best.

"Without a doubt. We see people during this event that we normally only see them at the drive-thru window. We've seen a lot of customers today and we've seen a lot of non-customers," she said. "I think we've had a record crowd this year. With the economy like it is, local means more now than ever before. This event brought people to town; we're right next door to Dills so I think they went up there and did their grocery shopping. Hopefully, the whole town benefits from this event each year."

For the stores that didn't benefit on Friday, it's almost guaranteed that they'll benefit when the tomatoes start to come in. People will be rushing to the stores to buy mayonnaise and loaf bread to make 'mater sandwiches.'



Hundreds came from all around to take part in United Community Bank Hiwassee's annual Customer Appreciation Day. The annual event attracts a crowd, young and old. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

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driver (played by Ali Bleckley) was involved in a two-vehicle crash.

Two persons were seriously injured, a third was killed, and several were walking wounded. It was a scene that could happen anywhere in America. It was a message that alcohol, people and vehicles don't mix.

The scenario was complete with emergency vehicles, a Lifeflight helicopter, law enforcement and the most vivid reminder, a hearse to carry away the dead victim.

"The basic theme was the prom, the dangers of drinking and driving," Jones said. "A lot of kids are killed on our nation's roads this

time of year for senseless reasons. We try to do something every year to give our local kids some awareness of the dangers that are out there."

After the Mock Crash, a funeral in the school's gymnasium followed.

"The funeral really hits home," Jones said. "The car crash is important, it shows you what can happen, but when you have a funeral, it really adds an impact. When you see a student lying in a casket, that really hits home; it really gets the students thinking."

Preparations for the Mock event took two months, Jones said.

"It takes a lot of preparation, making sure everyone is on the same page," he said. "It takes that long to get all the agencies together. Everyone involved did a magnificent job."

On Saturday, the Towns County High School Prom went on without a hitch, or, an incident that will never be forgotten, TCHS Principal Roy Perren said.

"We've got some great kids at Towns County High School," he said. "They really use their heads; they know it's okay to have fun, but the most important part, they know they don't have to have alcohol to have fun."



Above, YHC graduates listen as former Georgia Governor and U.S. Sen. Zell Miller delivers the college's Commencement Address. Below, UCB CEO Jimmy Tallent accepts the college's highest honor, the Presidential Medallion. Photos/James Reese and Lowell Nicholson

Spring clean for Eastern Star

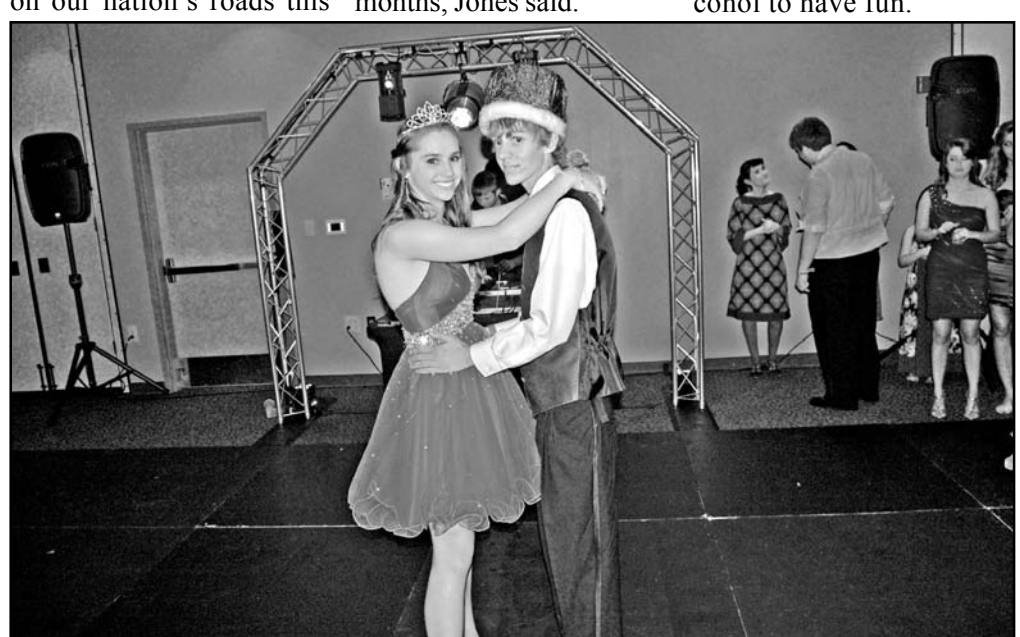
Spring has finally sprung & we all know what that means... spring cleaning! So, while you are cleaning out all of the things you don't need, use or just plain don't want anymore, think of the Eastern Star! It's time for our annual yard sale held on Memorial

Weekend. We will be the same place as last year, the old Johnny's Restaurant lot by Eller Tire.

All proceeds that we make will go towards our Scholarship Fund for the 2011 Hiwassee Graduate! All donations are appreciated! Nothing is too small in

these hard times.

Please call Frances Shook, (706-896-2647) Ina Kozesky (706-896-2995) or Brittany Pack (706-897-1725) to arrange dropping off our donation or for us to come pick it up! Thank you! We appreciate you!



Above, Ginny Rhodes and Logan Fambrough celebrate being named Prom Queen and King. Below, Towns County Schools Resource officer Darren Jones poses with the victims of Ghost Out, students who were pulled from class by the Grim Reaper every 30 minutes during the school day to represent those who die in alcohol-related crashes. Photos/Lowell Nicholson and James Reese