

empty commercial rental buildings," Kendall said.

The monthly furlough day for daycare workers wasn't the only bad news for Towns County employees. They also learned that the out-of-pocket cost of their health insurance would increase by 23 percent beginning in October.

"This is in addition to a 16 percent increase last year making a total increase of 39 percent in a two-year period," Kendall said. "We are on track to seeing Towns County employees health insurance costs increase by 100 percent in five years, instead of the TV reports that we keep hearing that if Congress does not put into place controls to curb the cost of health insurance, the cost increase will be 100 percent in the next 10 years."

Kendall said that he will

do everything within his power as sole commissioner to solve the rapid rise in health insurance costs for county employees by restructuring a policy to offer employees a choice of quality basic health insurance options.

"An option that will result in no extra cost to them or the taxpayers," Kendall said.

The sole commissioner added that it's time for Congress to address and help get a handle on enormous healthcare cost increases.

"It's a time when we must look for alternative funding other than property taxes," Kendall said, adding that tightening belts was imperative.

"We must restrain our spending and not keep reaching deeper into the pockets of the homeowner and property taxpayers," Kendall said.

Family stands tall in face of crisis...continued from page 1

strength."

Sherry was diagnosed with Adenoid Cystic Carcinoma in April. The tumor was located in the socket of her right eye. She had struggled with symptoms of the disease since March 2008; an MRI scan in September detected the growth. On April 15 the tumor was removed, but the difficult surgery could not remove all of the infected tissue. To do that, doctors would have to remove her eye. This was done June 4 and the good news was that the cancer was contained and the extraction had removed all the cancerous cells from the affected area.

With the good news and a planned radiation therapy program scheduled, Sherry and her family were ready to move on and get their life back on track. But, in what Sherry calls an act of God, Riley, almost 3, was the next member of the Rogers family to face a medical emergency.

In what a friend termed a "little boy event," Riley put a rock in his mouth and accidentally swallowed it. Sherry is convinced that this accident was really the hand of God. When doctors x-rayed Riley to locate the rock, they discovered a tumor the size of a softball on one of his kidneys. He had surgery on July 21 to remove the tumor and one of his kidneys.

"You wouldn't believe that there is anything wrong with Riley," Sherry last weekend before Riley's surgery. "He continues to be his very rambunctious self. I know he is going to be okay. God is making him ready for a large task."

The tumor was diagnosed as a Wilms tumor in an early stage. Surgeons were able to remove the tumor and the cancer was contained.

"It truly was a gift from God that Riley swallowed that rock," Sherry said. "We could have not known about the tumor for another couple of

years."

Now at home, Riley faces several weeks of chemotherapy and mom Sherry faces five weeks of radiation. These are precautionary, but will be taxing nevertheless.

"Riley has bounced right back and for the most part is doing extremely well," Sherry said.

Through it all, the Rogers' Faith has been tested, but Sherry is more convinced than ever about the presence of God's hand in their ordeal.

"We've been telling Riley that the Lord is his rock," she said. "He swallowed the rock and we found the tumor early. He will go on and live a normal life."

Sherry said she is thankful for all her family and friends. Sherry praised her oldest son Noah for being a "wonderful big brother and being extremely helpful."

She also thanked her friends and family who are organizing a benefit to help defray medical expenses. A yard sale takes place from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturday, Aug. 22 at New Life Church on U.S. 64 West, next to the State Employees Credit Union.

An account has also been established at United Community Bank for Sherry and Riley Rogers. Donations can be made at any branch.

"We are truly appreciative of all of these collective efforts," Sherry said. "The Lord is just weathering this storm. We could not have done it without his help."

The Rogers family asks the community to continue to pray for them as mother and son face additional treatments.

"I thank God for the miracles he continues to give us," she said. "My blessings outweigh my burdens everyday."

Cards and get well wishes can be sent to Sherry or Riley Rogers, 44 River Bluffs Drive, Hayesville, NC 28904.

Dexter sniffs out fugitive from justice...continued from page 1

volving the same case.

Deputies discovered that one of the persons involved in the incident had active warrants, and during the investigation that person fled the scene on foot, according to Chief Deputy Edge.

Deputy Marshall and his K-9 partner Dexter, a 3-year-old German shepherd, pursued the suspect, Shanen Glenn Britt, 29, of Hiwassee, up a mountain. Deputy Loyd and the Appalachian Drug Task Force agent also gave chase on foot, Chief Deputy Edge said.

Marshall and Dexter tracked Britt through the rugged terrain and woods and were able to take him into custody without further incident, Chief Deputy Edge said.

Additional investigation into the incident resulted in two other persons being taken into custody. Cindy Ann Kopec, 40, of Hiwassee, was charged with aggravated assault and making false statements to law enforcement. Amanda Lois Sweatman, 26, also of Hiwassee, was charged with obstruction of law enforcement and being party to a crime. Britt

was charged with two counts of obstruction of law enforcement, fleeing/ attempting to elude law enforcement and two counts of theft by receiving stolen property, Towns County jail records show.

The incident was the second call of service for Dexter to use his tracking skills. The first time, Dexter and his handler Deputy Marshall successfully tracked three lost people on Christmas night.

However, this was Dexter's first time tracking a fleeing suspect. Both times, Dexter tracked and led Deputy Marshall straight to their intended targets, Chief Deputy Edge said.

Dexter is used most often for narcotics related searches, but also is cross-trained in tracking and police protection as well as fugitive apprehension, Chief Deputy Edge said.

Dexter was donated to Towns County Sheriff's Office last November by Mount Holly Kennels and the Possible Dreams Foundation in North Carolina at no cost to the residents of Towns County.

to the music of Jim Woods and the Georgia Mountain Fair Band with the show starting at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are \$5.

On Day 3, the entertainment costs a little bit more as the Little River Band comes to Anderson Music Hall to put on a live performance.

The show starts at 7:30 p.m. with Level 1 seating costs at \$30 and Level 2 at \$20. Call (706) 896-4191 for ticket information.

Little River Band was the first Australian band to successfully conquer foreign markets from an Australian base. By 1982 they became the only act - from anywhere - to have a Top 10 U.S. single for six consecutive years.

The band headlined their own major shows in America, and toured internationally with the likes of the Doobie Brothers, Super Tramp, America, and the Eagles. The experience provided a huge learning curve that honed the band into one of the finest live stage bands

in the world.

The band scored 16 hit singles by 1985, as well as gold, platinum, and multi-platinum album sales awards. It also notched up eight top 10 singles in the U.S., where just two of their songs, "Reminiscing" and "Lady", have enjoyed more than 8 million radio plays between them.

Through the years Little River Band has thrived as a highly respected and constantly in-demand outfit, going about their craft with a dedication to excellence and professionalism that few, if any, can match.

The Little River Band is approaching their 35th anniversary and each year promises to be a very special one for a band that really has withstood the test of time.

Rakes is excited about the Cruiz-In and its entertainment line-up.

"Thanks to the city of Hiwassee and the kind people of the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds, there will be some

good ole mountain music shows, held Friday and Saturday night at the Anderson Music Hall located on the grounds," he said. "The nominal admission charge for the show will prove to be one of your best deals for the summer."

Also, the Northeast Georgia Board of Realtors and the Bank of Hiwassee, Blairsville and Blue Ridge proudly presents the First Annual Cruiz-In Classic Softball Tournament on Saturday, Aug. 15. The excitement begins at 9 a.m. at the Towns County Recreation Fields. The registration fee for the softball tournament is \$10 with all proceeds going to the local Towns County Food Pantry. Call (706) 896-3132 or (706) 896-2243 for more details.

Visit the Web at www.gammoonshinecruizin.com for additional information about the event.

BOE cuts...continued from page 1

impact certified employees which include teachers, school administrators, counselors and central office administrators.

"The non-certified staffers (bus drivers, custodial staff, cafeteria staff and para-professionals) will not be affected by these cuts," Behrens said. "Most work 180 days while students attend school."

Perdue called for school systems to schedule teachers and administrators for unpaid leave amounting to the equivalent of three days. This amount is in addition to additional Quality Basic Education cuts of 3 percent.

The effect on Towns County is the loss of \$125,617 for the current year, including the salaries for unpaid leave, Behrens said.

"These cuts are for the first half of the year," Behrens said. "There is a strong possibility that more cuts will follow."

The governor expects

the state to close Fiscal Year 2009 down 10.5 percent over Fiscal Year 2008. That's a total of \$1.83 billion in revenue shortfall. Trends over the last few months indicate that 2010 could be even worse.

"In the last three months, state revenues have dropped approximately 15 percent when compared to the same time last year," Behrens said. "Due to this large decline in revenue, the state must now look at the educational side of the expenditure spectrum for additional cuts."

"The governor recommended that we cut three work (non-student) days from the 2009-2010 school calendar," he said. "The state board of education has recognized this as an emergency, in this case, defined as a critical shortage in state revenues."

The state avoided such cuts to the education budget in the 2008-2009 school year in an effort to maintain quality student service.

Schools open Thursday...continued from page 1

Last week also marked the beginning of band season for a talented group of high school musicians. Local band students attended band camp to get a start on learning this year's football half-time show. Each day, one student in the band was rewarded for his or her efforts in improvement and/or excellence for the day.

Each winner was given, what was called, the "Indian Stick," which they were to decorate with something of their own.

Only time will tell if the Indians Marching Band will top last school year's efforts which included a trip to Memphis to march in the annual Liberty Bowl parade and perform during festivities at the annual football bowl game. Meanwhile, Behrens

welcomed teachers and administrators back on Monday with a breakfast in the cafeteria.

"We can't wait to get the kids back in school and get them back in the classroom," Behrens said. "It's been a real busy summer at the central office and we're excited about the return of our school children to the classroom."

"The beginning of a new school year is always an exciting time," he said. "Teachers come in and they're excited, the students come in and they're excited and the administrators are just glad they're both here."

"We hope to keep everyone smiling all year long," he said. "I know that the teachers are excited and ready to work hard to make sure our kids are well taken care of this year."

School will start on-time as planned, Dr. Behrens said.

"The students are expected to report for the first day of class on Thursday, Aug. 6."

"At this time there are no plans to modify the student school calendar for the upcoming year," Dr. Behrens said. "The school calendar will continue to have 180 days of attendance scheduled for the students."

If parents have any questions or concerns about the Towns County Schools System please feel free to contact Dr. Behrens at the Towns County Board of Education office, (706) 896-2279.

Staff writer Tonisha Shook contributed to this report in the Towns County Herald.



Pictured are the Indian Stick winners: (left to right) Alex Bacardi, Jason Jackson, Caitlin Sheffield, Terakah Evans and Jonathan Owenby. This year the Towns County Marching Band is very proud and 35 members loud.

Photo/Tonisha Shook