

Towns County Herald

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Thursday, Sept. 24, 2009

Local Weather and Lake Levels

Thur: Storms	83	61
Fri: Storms	81	61
Sat: Storms	74	59
Sun: Showers	74	55
Mon: Sunny	74	51
Tue: Sunny	72	49
Wed: Sunny	71	50



Upstream Elevation Predicted 9/24/09	
Lake Chatuge	1924.10
Lake Nottely	1772.40
Blue Ridge	1682.00

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Chamber Message Page 5

Last Kiss

The Towns County Tourism Association presents "Summer's Last Kiss" Art Festival on Saturday and Sunday on the Square in Downtown Hiwassee. This is a community celebration featuring art exhibits, music, dance, theatre, poetry, crafts, food and fun. Dance Saturday night away to the music of "The Sundown Band." Admission is free, hours on Saturday are 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Sunday, noon to 5 p.m. For more details, contact Jane Holland at (706) 896-4966 or by e-mail at janholland@brmcmc.net.

Gun Scare

On the morning of Monday, Sept. 14, Young Harris College Dean of the Division of Social and Behavioral Science and Professor of Political Science Dr. Lee March, a recognized expert in the Vietnam War era, was returning several instructional replicas and materials to his office after having made a Vietnam War presentation on Friday, Sept. 11. An alarmed student saw Dr. March walking into his office building with the items and reported it to campus authorities. Young Harris College Police Department and the Towns County Sheriff's Office reacted immediately to the situation. Upon further investigation, it was determined that the item in question was a rubber replica of a Vietnam War weapon.

The student acted responsibly, and we are grateful to the Young Harris College Police Department and the Towns County Sheriff's Office for their quick and professional response in responding to the situation.

Dr. March directs the Vietnam Veterans Oral History Project at YHC and frequently uses instructional replicas in his course lessons. He is the author of "If You Ain't Cav," a history of a cavalry unit in the Vietnam War, conducts a biennial student trip to Vietnam during the summer, and is involved in ongoing research into the Vietnam War and its impact on U.S. foreign policy.

Free Park Day

Parking and admission fees will be waived at Georgia's State Parks and historic sites on Saturday, Sept. 26 from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. To learn more, visit GeorgiaStateParks.org or call 1-800-864-PARK/7275

Rising waters worried emergency officials

By Charles Duncan
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Towns County dodged a bullet as torrential rains finally ceased Monday night.

However, the threat of even a gentle breeze still gives emergency services workers reason for pause. With the ground soaked, the slightest wind could create a domino effect for trees with root systems that run along the top of the ground. "We've got our fingers crossed that the wind will remain still," Towns County Fire Chief Mitch Floyd said on Monday night. "If we get any amount of significant wind, we're in for some real trouble."

Trouble that is similar to October 1995 when the remnants of Hurricane Opal drenched Northeast Georgia and brought trees with suspect root systems down with lingering winds that lasted



County emergency responders prepared for the worst as rains caused the Hiwassee River to rise. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

all night. Tree damage stretched across the state from that storm system. Towns County Emergency Services Director Ricky Mathis called a meeting of the minds on Monday afternoon to brainstorm with emergency personnel about the problems the county faced throughout the night.

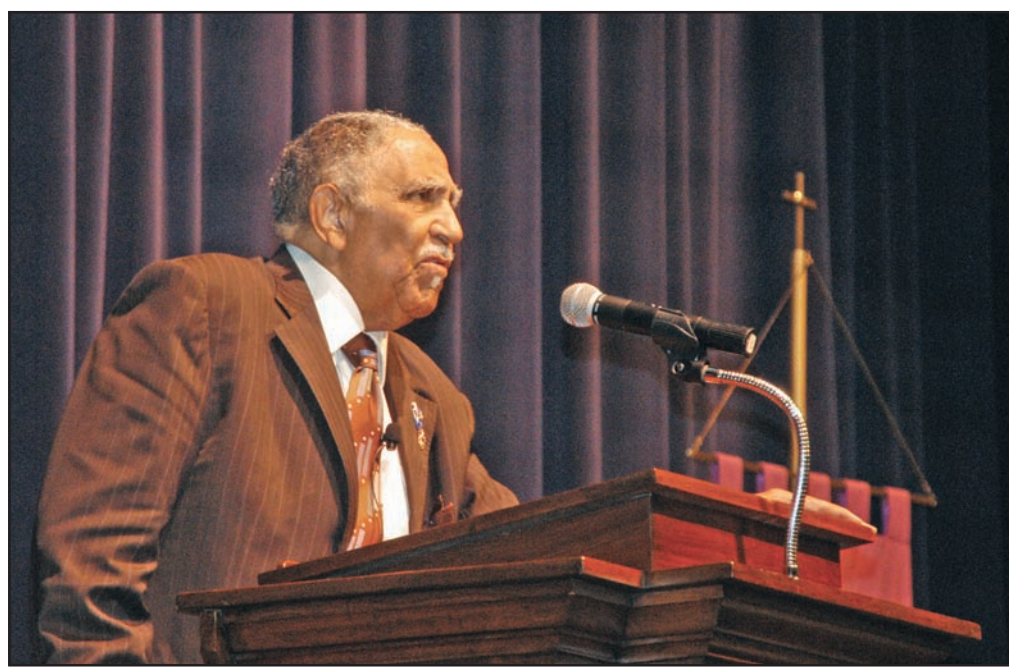
"We received a call at 3:15 p.m. (Monday) from the weather service that the flood watch had officially

become a warning," Mathis told the group at Emergency Services headquarters on Jack Dayton Circle.

"We've already had two inches of rain and we're expecting three more inches overnight," Mathis said. "Y'all are smart; you know our creeks won't hold another one to three inches of rain. We need to be making some plans and getting pre-

See River rises, page 3

Lowery calls for 'Chaplains of Common Good'



Legendary Civil Rights leader Joseph Lowery was mellow, down to earth and urging Young Harris College students to do the right thing and become a part of society as 'Chaplains of the Common Good.' Lowery was the featured speaker for the annual Ragsdale Lecture.

Photo/Charles Duncan

By Charles Duncan
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Dr. Joseph Lowery feels that his greatest achievement to date is reaching the ripe old age of 87 years old.

On Oct. 6th, Dr. Lowery's 88th birthday will be celebrated by many. He has one wish, that Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. were here to celebrate the day with him.

"I miss Martin so much," he said. "I really do." Dr. Lowery, the "Dean of the Civil Rights movement," was the featured lecturer at Young Harris College's Ragsdale Lecture, an event endowed by the Dick Paris family since 1983.

Lowery said that he enjoys visits and talks with today's college students. It keeps him young and gives him the opportu-

nity to share his many years of life experience.

Lowery challenged Young Harris College students to become "Chaplains of the Common Good," a cause championed by Dr. King himself.

"If Martin were here today, I think he would have said pretty much the same thing that I did," Dr. Lowery said. "He would urge people to be chaplains of the common good."

Lowery challenged the hundreds of students attending the lecture to think about the challenges of the day.

"We've lost sight of the need to serve the common good," Lowery said. "We need a fire in our bellies in the community of consciousness."

"We're shacking up with the prostitutes of greed, condoning the exploitation of the weak," he declared. "We need to fight with a faith that

is personal, but not private. We live in turbulent times and people are living in fear. We must become chaplains of the common good."

Lowery challenged the students to become agents of change, understanding and tolerance.

"Eighty-eight percent of the poorest counties in America are in the South," Lowery said. "The disparity of those who have so little and those who have so much is growing at an alarming rate."

"CEOs make more than 400 times more than the common worker," he said. "We live in turbulent times."

"We must remember that we serve a God who cares," he said. "I've never met anyone who called God when everything was alright. We must expand our relationship with God and let

See Dr. Lowery, page 18

Only 100 Willie Nelson tickets left

By Charles Duncan
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Better hurry to the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds. There are only 100 or so tickets left to the upcoming Willie Nelson concert.

Ticket sales for the Oct. 31st Willie Nelson concert went smooth as the kickoff of ticket sales began last week. Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds GM Hilda Thomason said the sales were brisk for the inaugural sales for the concert featuring the "Red-Headed Stranger."

Nelson, the actor, activist, singer, songwriter and the penman behind Patsy Cline's smash hit, "Crazy," agreed in late August to



Willie Nelson tickets are on sale at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds. Photo/Charles Duncan

come to Anderson Music Hall to perform on Halloween.

"Willie will be here on Halloween. It's really an exciting time," Thomason said.

Hiwassee Mayor Barbara Mathis has moved

Residents, Kendall, DNR, seek solution to Bears

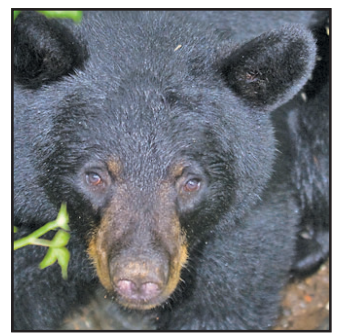
By Charles Duncan
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Lois Palmer has a solution to Towns County's bear crisis.

"There needs to be a longer season, increased bag limit and fewer restrictions on solving problems with problem bears," Palmer suggested on Monday to Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Biologist Ken Riddleberger.

Riddleberger heard the message loud and clear. In fact, he heard a lot of messages from the standing room only crowd Monday night at the Towns County Courthouse.

The message: black bears are a nuisance to homeowners and a threat to small children who attempt to play outside of



Black bears are wreaking havoc in Towns County. Photo/Jim Bryant

their homes.

Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall's idea to change last week's Thursday meeting to Monday night was a rousing success. Residents came to air out their differences that involve Towns County's ever increasing black bear population.

Residents spoke about bears in large numbers, See Black bears, page 7

BOE proposes millage rate increase

By Charles Duncan
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The Towns County Board of Education has proposed a 1.24 mill increase for the 2009-2010.

The board met Tuesday morning to approve advertisement of the five-year tax digest and to post announcements regarding millage rate hearings over the next two weeks.

Towns County Schools Superintendent Dr. Richard Behrens said the proposed increase in millage rate from 3.554 mills to 4.784 mills is to offset state budget shortfalls and shortfalls in the local sales taxes.

The proposed budget for the next fiscal year is \$11.6 million, Behrens said.

"And we've trimmed that down considerably," he said.

The current fiscal year's budget ran at \$12 million. The board will hold two meetings next week on Oct. 1. The first will be at noon at the Towns County School Auditorium and the second will be at 6 p.m. also at the school auditorium. A third meeting will be held at 8 a.m. on Oct. 8.

A shortfall of revenues combined with increased financial burdens imposed by



Richard Behrens

state cutbacks, increased Local Fair Share obligations and mandated salary requirements have impacted the 2010 millage rate proposed by the BOE.

The state recently cut funding to the local school system by \$125,617. The net loss to the school system is \$5,959,21 following the three days of unpaid leave.

The school system lost half a day early in the school year, the first of the scheduled unpaid leaves for teachers and administrators. A full day of unpaid leave is scheduled for Oct. 7 and another half day is planned for Dec. 18. The final day of unpaid leave for teachers and administrators is scheduled for Dec. 21.

The cuts were due to a large decline in sales tax revenues, prompting the state to look at the educational side of the expenditure spectrum for additional cuts.

Mountain Shelter event benefits cats and dogs

By Jessica Keaton
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As the door opens to the feline section at Mountain Animal Shelter, off Highway 76, the meowing quickly begins.

Lucky, the gray kitten in the top cage nearest the door eagerly wants to become someone's best friend. He rubs against the side of the cage and paces back and forth until he is petted. Tristan and John, one cage across and two down from Lucky, are sleeping soundly after their lunch. They are older cats and seem to be disinterested by the parade of new faces. In the cage below them are two calico kittens, Winnie and Whoopi. Both stick paws out, waving at visitors and passersby.

Perhaps the most lively cat of the bunch is one named Akim, who's only color is in his eyes. He bops his head against the cage in order to get some personal attention. Superstition tells of black cats being bad luck, but this cat's only misfortune is the fact that he doesn't have a home.



Whoopi wants a new home. The shelter is over run with cats and kittens. Photo/Jessica Keaton

The Mountain Animal Shelter, which serves both Towns and Union counties, is not accepting cats at this time due to the fact that their cat facilities are packed to maximum capacity. Because the shelter is a "no kill facility" which means they do not euthanize existing animals in order to make room for new animals, cats that are brought to the shelter are being put on a waiting list. Currently, there are

See Puttin On, page 3

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