

Towns County Herald

Legal Organ of Towns County

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Local Weather and Lake Levels

Thur: Cloudy 73 54
Fri: Showers 67 56
Sat: Showers 68 42
Sun: Sunny 66 40
Mon: Sunny 62 40
Tue: Sunny 61 39
Wed: Sunny 63 46



Upstream Elevation Predicted 10/28/09
Lake Chatuge 1920.40
Lake Nottely 1766.00
Blue Ridge 1674.90

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Charter Bus to Glascock Co.

The Towns County Athletics Booster Club is working to charter a bus to take Indians' fans to the season finale in Glascock County on Nov. 6. Seats are available for \$24 each. Contact Sandy Foster or Nancy Noblet to let them know if you're interested in a bus seat to Glascock County. Hurry, first come, first served.

Halloween on the Square

It's that time of year again. Halloween on the Square will be held Oct. 30 from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. Preparations are in progress.

Space is at a premium so it's important to let folks know who wants to set up a table this year. Please reply ASAP.

For those not wishing to set up a table this year, donations of candy, money or prizes for the costume contest are appreciated.

Also, this year a new tradition begins. Everyone who can, please bring a can of food to donate to the Towns County Food Pantry. There will be bins set up around the Square to collect canned goods. For more details, call (706) 896-2202.

Homeowners Meeting Canceled

The Towns County Homeowners Association announce the cancellation of their scheduled Pot Luck Dinner Meeting at the Towns County Senior Center. The Association regrets the cancellation of the meeting that was scheduled to be held at 6 p.m. on Thursday, Oct. 29 in Hiawassee.

The cancellation is due to a conflict with another gathering on the same night. The North Georgia Patriots are schedule to hold a meeting at the Towns County Auditorium on that same day. The Association meeting will be rescheduled at a later date.

Towns County voters head to polls

By Charles Duncan
TOWNS COUNTY HERALD
charlesduncan@brmemc.net

When Towns County and Hiawassee city residents go to the polls on Tuesday, they'll have much to think about.

At the top of the list will be whether or not to increase the local homestead exemption by \$8,000. Towns County would be the first county to elect to do so since the state eliminated that same amount from the local exemptions statewide.

Second, city voters must decide if Mayor Barbara Mathis, an incumbent of 14 years, will return for another four years or if political newcomer Chris Swett deserves a chance in the Mayor's Seat.

Third, those same city voters must decide if Incumbent City Council member Anne Johnson will return to her council seat or if former

Towns County Schools Superintendent Stephen Smith will unseat her.

Towns County residents can vote in favor or against to increase their \$2,000 Homestead Exemption by \$8,000 making a total of \$10,000 tax assessed or \$25,000 Fair Market Value of their home for which they would pay no taxes.

Kendall said that there are two factors that led to tax increases included in the current tax bills just mailed out to residents.

First, the Board of Education increased its tax mills to operate Towns county schools by 1.24 mills. As provided by the Georgia Constitution only the Board of Education has power to levy school taxes.

Second, due to the state budget shortfall, in January, state lawmakers passed a law eliminating

state funding for an additional \$8,000 exemption they had been funding. Currently, residents only receive the original \$2,000 Homestead Exemption on their 2009 tax bill.

"As your elected commissioner, I requested this Legislation which was introduced by State Rep. Stephen Allison and State Sen. Jim Butterworth allowing Towns County residents a voice, through their vote, on how they wish to fund their governmental services," Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall said. "Towns County residents can exercise their civic responsibility and privilege by voting 'yes' or 'no' on Nov. 3."

If approved exemption will be effective Jan. 1, 2010, Commissioner Kendall said.

Polls will be open at all

See Polls, page 5A

Mayor Mathis seeks vote of confidence

By Jessica Keaton
TOWNS COUNTY HERALD
jessica.tcherald@brmemc.net

Incumbent mayor of 14 years, Barbara Mathis, had a lot to say about her Hiawassee experiences and her vision of the future.

"I've lived in Hiawassee for my entire life," she said. "I lived in Marietta for a period of time...but I came back to Hiawassee because I loved it so much."

Hiawassee was a totally different place during the time she was previously a ward secretary at Chatuge Regional Hospital.

"It has grown so much," she says as she names off places that have relocated or closed altogether, including the elementary school, high



Mayor Barbara Mathis

school, and the "old pasture" where the children used to play, which is currently Ingles.

Her vision of the future is simple: the preservation of Downtown Hiawassee and the square along with the

See Mayor, page 5A

Smith runs for city council seat

By Charles Duncan
TOWNS COUNTY HERALD
charlesduncan@brmemc.net

Stephen Smith wakes up every morning at 4:30 and pulls on his running clothes.

By 5 a.m. he's jogging through the city, often times covered in a foggy mist, an early morning reminder of beautiful Lake Chatuge.

He carries a Glad trash bag with him on his five-mile run. Not many people witness his morning ritual, but those who do, more often than not observe his civic-minded approach to keeping Hiawassee and Towns County clean.

Lately Smith has changed his jogging routine. He's out more when the sun's rays are already glistening on Lake Chatuge. He finds himself stopping and talking with passersby, most former students and professional acquaintances.

Smith, 61, is running for Hiawassee City Council, lit-



Former Towns County Schools Superintendent Stephen Smith is seeking to unseat Incumbent Council Member Anne Johnson.

erally. The retired educator, principal and school superintendent hopes to represent the people of Hiawassee following the Nov. 3rd General Election.

"Who is Stephen Smith? Stephen Smith is a happy, retired Towns County educator, married for 38 years, father of six beautiful children, grandfather of six

and a half beautiful children. He's energetic, motivated and believes in integrity and high moral values," Smith said. "Most of all, he cares for the well being of others. I like to think that I put people before myself."

After serving in the United States Naval Submarine Service, Smith received

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Swett touts public service as key to Mayor's race

By Charles Duncan
TOWNS COUNTY HERALD
charlesduncan@brmemc.net

Chris Swett is a foot-soldier.

He served his country for 23 years - 20 active, 3 in the reserves.

Today, Swett, 48, is going door-to-door throughout the city of Hiawassee in a grassroots effort to become its next mayor.

"I need to speak to people face-to-face," he said. "I need to learn their concerns directly from them. In a small-town environment, government should come to you."

Born in Florida, Swett spent his youth growing up in DeKalb County. Later, he moved back to Florida with his mother and would graduate from Satellite High School, in Satellite Beach.

"I had the opportunity to grow up in Georgia and I've always felt drawn back to those Georgia roots," he said. "It's hard to put into words, the connection I feel with the history that fills the



Chris Swett

space in my heart."

Swett went on to earn a bachelor's degree in Marine Science from Jacksonville University. From there, he went straight into the United States Military.

He served his country from coast-to-coast, from Florida to Mississippi to California. Later, he served off the coast of Japan with a U.S. Carrier Taskforce.

Throughout his military travels, Swett said he's never felt more at home than in the friendly confines of Hiawassee.

See Swett, page 3A

YHC Family weekend fills hotels

By Jessica Keaton
TOWNS COUNTY HERALD
jesskeat@student.yhc.edu

Young Harris College was bustling with family members this weekend who attended the annual Young Harris College Family Weekend. During this time, parents and other family members get to share in the college experience with their students.

Perhaps the highlight of the weekend is the chance for the family members of the students to attend the same classes as the students do on a daily basis. This gives the family members an opportunity to meet the professors that have been teaching their students for the semester.

However, family weekend was not completely dedicated to academics. Other events in-



Hundreds of families came to YHC over the weekend to visit their children. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

cluded, on Saturday, Men's and Women's Soccer games against Gordon College, a Baseball scrimmage against Emmanuel, and a YHC Music Showcase including the Jazz Ensemble, Compulsive Lyres, the Concert Choir, Southern Harmony, and the Guitar Ensemble.

On Sunday, the weekend closed out with a Worship Service at Sharp Memorial, sending the par-

ents off with a positive message and time well spent with their students.

The event kept businesses bustling and hotels were almost maxed to capacity.

"I don't exactly believe that everyone here realizes just what Young Harris means to this region," said Chad Hooper, general Manager of The Ridges Resort at Field Stone.

Towns could be next Hollywood

By Charles Duncan
TOWNS COUNTY HERALD
charlesduncan@brmemc.net

Towns County residents could soon find themselves as extras in a movie.

Film location specialist Craig Dominey of the state's Economic Development Division's Film, Music and digital Entertainment Division, came to town on Monday to discuss locations he would like to capture on film.

Dominey, accompa-

nied by Towns County Chamber President Angel Long, met with members of the Towns County Industrial Development Authority board.

"If a movie comes into your community, there's no doubt that they will spend lots of money," Dominey said. "They'll fill up your hotels, they'll frequent your shops and they'll pack your restaurants."

Also, the aftermath of a movie filmed here could be lucrative.

"Deliverance gave birth to white-water rafting in Rabun County," he said. "Fried Green Tomatoes was a major boon to Juliette, Georgia."

"This state is a major tax break for movie companies, up to 30 percent," he said. "Georgia is among the Top Five movie locations in the U.S. Our job is to try and keep that going."

Dominey talked about recent hits on the tube that

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Three Dog Night thrills the Hall

By Jessica Keaton
TOWNS COUNTY HERALD
jessica.tcherald@brmemc.net

Anderson Music Hall went back to the 70's with Three Dog Night this past Saturday. The house was packed full of fans both young and old to hear hits such as "One", "Mama Told Me Not to Come" and "Joy to the World".

Before the band hit the stage, some lucky fans who put their names on dollars and heard their names called by WNGC 106.1's own radio personality, Shana Vaughn, received upgrades on their tickets to either the front or third row. Proceeds from the raffle were donated to Alzheimer's research.

However, not only did Three Dog Night perform their most familiar hits, they also included songs that "only die-hard Three Dog Night fans" would know, including one of their songs, written by Randy Newman, which, later, became a hit for Joe Cocker: "You Can Leave Your Hat On".

The band performed a modern-day ren-

dition of "Mama", but, on a crowd consensus, the old version of the song was the favored one.

The last song of the night, judging from the cheers from the crowd, was clearly the crowd favorite. "Joy to the World", performed as the encore, brought the entire audience to its feet in one last moment of 70's nostalgia.

With the iconic band's concert now a piece of Anderson Music Hall history, Hiawassee prepares for the arrival of the Red-Headed Stranger, Willie Nelson.

Nelson, who pinned the legendary Patsy Cline hit Crazy, sold out in a matter of days once tickets went on sale Sept. 18.

Prices for his concert tickets on the Internet have ranged as high as \$600.

Hiawassee welcomes Willie.

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