

Towns County Herald

Legal Organ of Towns County

Your Hometown Newspaper Since 1928

50 Cents

www.townscountyherald.net

Publication Number 635540 Volume 80 Number 1

Wednesday, Nov. 11, 2009

Local Weather and Lake Levels

Thur: Cloudy 61 35
Fri: Cloudy 65 43
Sat: Cloudy 65 42
Sun: Cloudy 66 43
Mon: Cloudy 62 43
Tue: Showers 61 39
Wed: Showers 56 39



Upstream Elevation Predicted 11/11/09
 Lake Chatuge 1919.90
 Lake Nottely 1764.90
 Blue Ridge 1676.30

INDEX

2 sections, 20 Pages

Arrests.....2A
 Church/Obits.....7,8A
 Classifieds.....3B
 Editorial.....4A
 Elected officials.....4A
 Legals.....4B
 Sports.....9,10A
 Television.....2B

Chamber Chronicles Page 1B

Youth teams swept

The Towns County Indians 9-year-old Junior Pee-Wees and the 5- and 6-year-old Termites both fell out of championship contention on Saturday as both suffered 20-0 losses.

The teams had advanced to the second round of the Conference Playoffs.

Coach Jimmy Smith's 9-year-old Indians lost in Rabun County to Union County. The 5- and 6-year-old Termites lost a showdown with Dawson County at Chestatee High School in Gainesville.

A win would have advanced both to the championship round on Nov. 14 at Union County.

Coach Smith said the boys appreciated the support of fans.

X-Country Ladies take 15th

It's that time of year again and the Towns County Cross Country Ladies headed back to Carrollton in search of Cross Country glory.

The Lady Indians placed 15 in Class A in Carrollton at the Carrollton High School Cross Country Course.

The ladies met the challenge of their coach.

Conrad stars in School House Rock Live!

Towns County High School alum Nicole Conrad plays *Shulie* in the Theatre Young Harris presentation of *Schoolhouse Rock Live!*

The production will be Young Harris College's children's show for the 2009-2010 season.

More than 4,000 students, first through fifth grades, saw the show last week, free of charge. YHC hosted students from Gilmer, Rabun, Towns, Union and White counties.

The play is open to the public from Nov. 19-22. Tickets are still available for the colorful musical.

Towns homeowners must apply for new tax break

By Charles Duncan
 TOWNS COUNTY HERALD
 charlesduncan@brmenc.net

When it was all said and done, 1,899 Towns County voters came to the local polls.

Of those totals, 1,806 supported an amendment that Towns County homeowners with local exemptions the only county in Georgia with a \$10,000 tax break. Only 52 voters didn't want a tax break.

The vote increases the local exemption from \$2,000 allowed by the state to \$10,000 only in Towns County. The break takes effect Jan. 1.

"I want to thank everyone who had a part in making this legislation a reality which is now law," Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall said. "Towns County is now the only county in the 159 counties in the State to give

homeowners a \$10,000 homestead exemption."

Homestead Exemption is a state law passed in 1937 that exempts homeowners from having to pay taxes on the first \$5,000 fair market value which is a \$2,000 tax assessment on their home. The state passed another law about 10 years ago to increase the original \$2,000 exemption to \$10,000, and to reimburse local governments for the amount of tax revenue that impacted the local tax digest.

During the 2009 session, the state legislature eliminated the additional \$8,000 the state had been giving homeowners through the local governments for a decade. The state homestead exemption reverted back to the original 71-year-old \$2,000 for the 2009 tax bills mailed to homeowners. Earlier this year, Com-

missioner Kendall thought the issue was important enough to ask the local legislative delegation to seek legislation to allow Towns County voters to cast ballots on whether to restore \$8,000 to the \$2,000 exemption provided by the state.

The local Towns County Constitutional Amendment, which increases the amount of local homestead exemption to \$25,000 fair market value or \$10,000 tax assessment at 40 percent for Towns County residents only.

Kendall said that in order to receive the added exemption, homeowners that qualify by having their homestead exemptions locally must apply for the increased savings.

"In order to receive the increased exemption, homeowners must apply by signing at the Tax Commissioner's Office,"



City and county voters gathered at the polls to reelect Hiawassee's mayor, a new city councilman and pass a tax break. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

Commissioner Kendall said. "Once you have signed, you do not have to sign again."

In 2007 Towns County residents approved, by a large majority, tax legislation tied to Homestead Exemption that Kendall had placed

on the ballot which limits to 3 percent any annual increase of tax assessment that can be placed on their homes. "This allows the as-

See Tax break, page 3A

Hiawassee signs off on millage

By Charles Duncan
 TOWNS COUNTY HERALD
 charlesduncan@brmenc.net

The Hiawassee City Council signed off last week on the 2009 millage rate.

The City Council set the rate after public hearing with Mayor Barbara Mathis at its regular at City Hall.

City Manager Rick Stencil presented the 2009 Tax Digest and the City's Five Year History of Levy to Mayor Mathis and the Council.

Mayor Mathis requested that the 2009 Millage for the City of Hiawassee remain the same as the 2008 Levy of 2.270. Council followed suit.

The passage of the millage rate marks the seventh consecutive year that the City of Hiawassee rate has remained the same or has been decreased.

"We're living in difficult economic times and now is not the time for the millage to increase," Mayor

Mathis said. "The City Council, City Manager and employees want to do our part in holding down all costs for our taxpayers."

In other business, City Manager Stencil discussed an update on the potential agreement between the city and the U.S. Forest Service to service the Jack Rabbit Campground in North Carolina.

"The forest service has provided the first draft of the contract," Stencil said.

The city manager, mayor and city planning committee are reviewing the contract.

"It is the intent of the staff to present this to council in December," Stencil said.

The forest service has offered to pay the \$1 million cost of extending sewer to the popular campground.

Also, Mayor Mathis thanked everyone for help-



Mayor Barbara Mathis signing with Halloween on the Square.

"This was the most successful and well attended Halloween event so far," she said. "Both the Towns County Food Bank and the Shop with a Cop program benefited from the large crowds."

"The city sincerely appreciates the donated candy and many other contributions afforded us from the people of this community."

The bands ready to hit Hall

By Charles Duncan
 TOWNS COUNTY HERALD
 charlesduncan@brmenc.net

The next hottest ticket at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds is the Nov. 21 concert featuring the Marshall Tucker Band and Atlanta Rhythm Section at Anderson Music Hall.

Tickets are now on sale and like the recent Willie Nelson Concert, those colorful pieces of high-grade paper are a hot ticket to have.

The Marshall Tucker Band is all about good ole' Southern Fried music, with hits that include *Hillbilly Band* from the classic debut album, *Blue Ridge Mountain Skies*, the 1977 smash hit, *Heard it in a Love Song*, *Take the Highway*, from the band's self-titled album.

Almost everyone has heard of the Appalachian

ballad *Fire on the Mountain* from the *Searchin' for a Rainbow* album, and the legendary *Midnight Promises*.

As if MTB, which debuted in 1973, wasn't enough, the Atlanta Rhythm Section will bring back many a memory with the classic hits *Imaginary Lover*, *Doraville*, *So Into You* and *Spooky*.

For years, the band was a favorite on New Year's Eve because of their legendary hit *Champagne Jam*. ARS was once the session band at Studio One in Doraville, a piecemeal group of musicians that had once backed up the legendary Roy Orbison.

ARS played on other albums three to four days a week and then worked on their own songs. They eventually pulled together enough material for an album. A demo of some of these

songs earned them a two-record deal with MCA Records/Decca Records.

Thus, ARS officially was born.

Over the years the band has been renowned for its stage presence that includes a smooth sound and a variety of songs that offer both pop and rock appeal.

Champagne Jam, released in January 1978, was the breakthrough album that marked the zenith of music-making, critical support and popular acclaim for ARS.

Ticket Prices are \$35 plus \$2 handling and \$25 plus \$2 handling, Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds General Manager Hilda Thomason said.

The fun begins at 7 p.m. on Nov. 21 for those lucky enough to have tickets.

Sen. Butterworth: low taxes vital

By Charles Duncan
 TOWNS COUNTY HERALD
 charlesduncan@brmenc.net

Keeping taxes low is the key to economic stimulus, State Sen. Jim Butterworth said.

Towns County, which has one of the lowest tax millage rates in the state, and Georgia's other 158 counties are poised for an economic turn-around using free market principles, said Sen. Butterworth, who represents Towns County in Senate District 50.



State Sen. Jim Butterworth "Georgia is open for business and will remain that way as long as we don't raise taxes," said Sen. Butterworth. "During times of economic downturns and declining revenues, you will

hear a variety of suggestions on how to turn around the economy.

"These suggestions can be as reasonable as tax incentives for job growth or as outlandish as raising taxes on struggling businesses and families," Sen. Butterworth said. "Raising taxes in Georgia is not an option. Georgia is poised for an economic turn-around utilizing free-market principles."

Sen. Butterworth cites

See Butterworth, page 12A

Sheriff's Office receives \$500,000-plus federal grant

By Charles Duncan
 TOWNS COUNTY HERALD
 charlesduncan@brmenc.net

The Towns County Sheriff's Office has received more than \$500,000 from the U.S. Department of Justice to fight drug trafficking and the growth of the illegal drug trade in Towns County.

"This grant (\$535,828) is most beneficial for the citizens of Towns County because it requires no matching funds from the county," Towns County Sheriff Chris Clinton said. "The grant will help pay the cost of salaries, overtime, equipment and vehicles used in our effort to keep Towns County safe from drug dealers."

Clinton has discussed the grant award with Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall and has asked that his office act as a pass-through agency for the funds.

"This will allow any employees paid by grant funds to enjoy the same benefits as other employees of



Sheriff Chris Clinton

offices and departments of Towns County government," Sheriff Clinton said. "I will be meeting again this week with the Commissioner and I hope to gain his support and cooperation in this effort to provide essential services to the citizens of Towns County, utilizing grant funds to help get through this tough economic time without losing the battle against drugs and crime in our community."

Meanwhile Clinton isn't stopping there. He's working with a representa-

See Grant, page 3A

'The Voice' on Nov. 28

By Charles Duncan
 TOWNS COUNTY HERALD
 charlesduncan@brmenc.net

"The Voice" is coming to Hiawassee.

Sandi Patty, the voice of contemporary Christian music is coming to Anderson Music Hall on Nov. 28.

Tickets are still available for the 2009 Christmas Show at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds. Ticket Prices are \$35 plus \$2 handling and \$25 plus \$2 handling, Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds General Manager Hilda Thomason said.

Church Groups of 10 or more also receive a \$5 discount, Thomason said.

Patty, 53, was born into a family of musicians; her father was a minister of music and her mother served as the church pianist. According to her official Web site, she first performed at the age of 2 when she sang "Jesus Loves Me" for her church. A few years later, she and her brothers joined her parents in a performing group, known as "The Ron Patty Family," and sang at churches across the nation during summer holidays.

The rest as they say is history. Patty recorded her first album, *For My Friends*, an independent



Sandi Patty

endeavor that landed in the hands of executives at SingSpiration! Records. In 1979, she signed with SingSpiration! and released her first professional record, *Sandi's Song*.

At the peak of her career, her concerts were so heavily attended that she performed in often sold-out mainstream arenas and concert halls. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, she averaged more than 200 concerts a year, and supported a staff of more than 30 that managed her career.

Showtime for her Christmas Show is 7 p.m. on Nov. 28.

TOWNS COUNTY HERALD

