

Towns County Herald

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Local Weather and Lake Levels

Thur: Cloudy	44	21
Fri: Cloudy	42	27
Sat: Sleet/Snow	41	32
Sun: Cloudy	51	30
Mon: Cloudy	51	34
Tue: Cloudy	54	35
Wed: Showers	49	31



Upstream Elevation Predicted 12/09/09	
Lake Chatuge	1919.20
Lake Nottely	1763.50
Blue Ridge	1672.20

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Our gift to you

The Towns County Herald wants to make a difference during hard times.

For those currently unemployed, Senior Citizens and U.S. Military veterans, the Herald offers \$5 subscriptions for 1 year. That's a savings of \$21 off the newsstand price.

This offer extends to residents of Towns and Union counties in Georgia and Clay County, NC.

Simply bring proof of unemployment status; a simple Photo ID will suffice for Senior Citizens.

Veterans must provide proof of U.S. Military service.

The Herald also offers \$10 subscriptions for new subscribers from Towns and Union counties in Georgia and Clay County, NC.

At the end of one year, those subscribers can renew at a rate of \$15.

Again, we hope to make a difference when folks need it the most.



Icy Weather

Stack up more firewood and break out the blankets again. Old Man Winter is sticking around.

Temperatures are expected to dip into the low 20s by Thursday and a storm system in the Southern Plains already is producing heavy rains.

The National Weather Service is calling for a wintry mix in the Towns-Union area on Saturday, with temperatures reaching 32 degrees on Saturday night.

The storm system is expected to bring heavy rains to the North Georgia area as early as Tuesday next week.

See the Classifieds for firewood sales; see your local drygoods store for an umbrella.



Santa breakfast

The American Legion Ladies Auxilliary will host Breakfast with Santa on Dec. 12 from 8:30 a.m. to 11 a.m. The cost is \$6 for adults and \$3 for the kids.

There will be toys for each child in attendance. Remember to RSVP at the VFW if you plan to attend the Saturday Santa Breakfast event.

Mother, son perish in Monday morning blaze

By Charles Duncan
TOWNS COUNTY HERALD
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An early morning house fire on Monday on Scataway Road has claimed the life of an elderly Hiawassee woman and her adult son, Towns County Fire Chief Mitch Floyd said.

Ivalee Burrell, 82, and her son, Ernest Burrell, believed to be in his early 50s, perished in the early morning blaze at 581 Scataway Road.

The State Fire Marshal's Office is now in charge of the investigation to determine the exact cause of the blaze that claimed the lives of both mother and son, Chief Floyd said.

"Brian Smith with the State Fire Marshal's Office will head up the investigation," Chief Floyd said.

There are a couple of possibilities as to what

caused the blaze, Chief Floyd said.

"We've got an LP heater and a Christmas tree in the area of origin of the fire. It's a little early to tell either way," Chief Floyd said.

Hiawassee Police Chief Jimmy Wright, Ivalee Burrell's neighbor for many years, was leaving to go on a hunting trip when he noticed the blaze. Wright quickly called emergency authorities to alert them to the blaze. The call came in at 6:04 a.m.

"I really feel for the family," Chief Wright said. "I've known Ivalee Burrell all my life. This is tragic, it's terrible."

The actual cause of the fire is still under investigation, Chief Floyd said.

"We know it started in the living room. Like I said earlier, we've got a couple



Towns County Fire Chief Mitch Floyd tries to make sense of an early morning blaze on Scataway Road that claimed the lives of a mother and her son. Ivalee Burrell, 82 and her son Ernest Burrell, believed to be in his early 50s, perished in the fire. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

of sources that could have caused the fire, but right now, we're trying to narrow that down," Chief Floyd said.

Both of the victims were found in the living

room area, Chief Floyd said.

"We think at this point in time that both of them died as a result of the fire," he said. "Their bodies have been transported to the Georgia Bureau of Investi-

gation State Crime Laboratory for autopsy. We're waiting to hear those results to determine exact cause of death."

See Fire, page 5A

'King Josh' KOM reign begins

By Charles Duncan
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Josh Barnes has been dreaming of becoming a King of the Mountain wrestling champion since he was in the sixth grade.

He almost achieved that goal last year as a sophomore, coming up on the tail-end of an 8-2, three-round decision to heavy-weight Donovan Byers of Hayesville, NC.

On Saturday, Barnes battled his way through wrestlers from two states and finally realized his dream of having his hand raised as King of the Mountain heavyweight champion.

Barnes defeated Alex Craze of Murphy, NC to finally live his dream.

"This is surreal," he said. "I've dreamed about this since sixth grade and it's finally happening. Coach (Jeff) Stowers was right; you can do anything that you



Towns County Indians' heavyweight wrestler Josh Barnes has his hand raised in victory on Saturday during the King of the Mountain tournament at Towns County Schools. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

put your mind to."

Barnes didn't play football in the fall to focus all his efforts on wrestling. It paid off in the long run.

"This is what it's all about," Barnes said. "I worked really hard to get where I'm at now. I'm really proud of this team for hanging in there and doing the impossible in spite of forfeiting three weight classes. If we really work hard, I

think we can make it to state for the first time."

The Towns County Indians did do the impossible on Saturday, finishing fourth in a 15-team field despite forfeiting three weight classes, 103, 112 and 119. The Indians finished behind Lumpkin, Franklin and Dawson counties respec-

GBI gets a break in Cornwell case

By Charles Duncan
TOWNS COUNTY HERALD
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CLEVELAND - The Georgia Bureau of Investigation holds hope that former Towns County sheriff's Deputy Kristi Cornwell is still alive.

GBI Special Agent Mike Ayers released photos of a vehicle and a suspect that they now believe are connected to the Aug. 11 disappearance of the 38-year-old Cornwell near her Union County home.

"It is my firm belief that you never abandon hope, that you maintain hope until you're proven otherwise," Ayers said during a press conference at GBI headquarters in Cleveland. "It will always be the policy of this office and the other law enforcement agencies involved in this investigation that



A silver Nissan Xterra, similar to the one shown and this suspect could lead authorities to Kristi Cornwell. Illustration/Marla

Kristi Cornwell is still alive."

Cornwell, also a former state corrections officer and probation officer, was last heard from at approximately 9 p.m. on Aug. 11 while taking an evening walk on Jones Creek Road in Blairsville.

A similar incident in the Ranger community in neighboring North Carolina about



25 miles from where Cornwell was abducted happened around 9 p.m. on Aug. 2 while a woman was walking along a road toward the Ranger Community Center.

Investigators say a vehicle pulled up behind that victim and knocked her to the ground. A man got out

See Kristi, page 5A

Butterworth, Allison speak to GOP

By Matthew Jarrard
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Towns County GOP faithful welcomed Senate District 50 State Sen. Jim Butterworth and House District 8 State Rep. Stephen Allison to speak at their monthly meeting at Daniel's Steakhouse in Hiawassee held last week in Hiawassee.

There, Sen. Butterworth and State Rep. Allison spoke about proposals they are going to bring to the upcoming

2010 Georgia Assembly that kicks off in January.

"There is a growing ground-swell of attendance in meetings like this across our senate district. Numbers are increasing, and tonight is an example of that," Sen. Butterworth said. "There is a tremendous amount of work going into the Republican Party in Towns County."

One important issue is Lake Lanier. Sen. Butterworth spoke of a recent ruling from Minnesota



State Sen. Jim Butterworth

Judge Paul Magnuson, which states that Lake Lanier should not be used to serve the city of Atlanta

See Lawmakers, page 3A

Chief: 'I wish I could have done more'

By Charles Duncan
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Hiawassee Police Chief Jimmy Wright risked life and limb to try and save his neighbors Ivalee Burrell and her son Ernest Burrell.

Ivalee Burrell, 82, and her son, Ernest, in his 50s, were the victims of an early morning fire on Scataway Road in Hiawassee.

Monday was Wright's day off. He was headed for some solace in the woods with the hope of bagging a buck as he backed out of his driveway before daylight.

When his tires hit the pavement, a sense of horror struck Wright's nervous system. He saw flames beating a path through his neighbor's home.

"I knew there was a handicapped man that lived there with his elderly mother," Wright said. "I think Mrs. Burrell had been having some medical problems, but I'm not sure."

He quickly called emergency authorities to alert them to the blaze. The call came in at 6:04 a.m.

What he did next was



Chief Jimmy Wright

pure heroism. Wright said he did what anyone would have done, but it's hard to believe there are many who would go inside a burning building, risking life and limb.

"It looked like it was fully involved, but it wound up that it wasn't, it was just the front part of the home. The place where they were at was fully involved."

Wright beat on the back door.

"I couldn't get an answer at the back door, I couldn't get to the front door," he said. "I did what I thought I had to do."

Wright, a hulk of a man, quickly resorted to brute strength as he busted down a back door and made his way through the burning

See Wright, page 5A

New development comes to Towns

By Charles Duncan
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As many as 45 new jobs are headed to Towns County as the Baptist Retirement Communities of Georgia looks to add its third campus.

The project, estimated between \$8 million and \$10 million, is slated to be built on almost 23 acres beside Towns County Schools, President and CEO Laura Willis said last week at Hiawassee City Hall.

Willis said the facility will employ between 40 and 45 people, not to mention the countless construction jobs that will accompany the project.

"I'm excited," Hiawassee Mayor Barbara Mathis said. "It is so wonderful to know that we're getting something in our area that will provide jobs for local people and will boost the economy in our area."

"I think it's fabulous to have the Georgia Baptist Association here, I really do," Mayor Mathis said.

Towns County Sole

Commissioner Bill Kendall said he had heard about the project for quite some time. He was ecstatic that the development had come to fruition.

"I think this is just the beginning," he said. "Businesses and organizations are starting to realize that we have such a low tax base. That in and of itself is a legitimate calling card for commercial and residential growth."

Baptist Retirement Communities of Georgia, Inc. is an agency of the Georgia Baptist Convention. It operates under a charter granted by the state as a non-profit organization for ministry to senior citizens.

Willis said that the group had been looking at locations in the North Georgia Mountains for almost four years before finally set-

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TOWNS COUNTY HERALD

