

Towns County Herald

Legal Organ of Towns County

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Wednesday, Dec. 23, 2009

Local Weather and Lake Levels

Thur: Showers	49 39
Fri: Showers	49 31
Sat: Cloudy	43 27
Sun: Cloudy	44 26
Mon: Sunny	46 29
Tue: Cloudy	47 31
Wed: Snow	46 28



Upstream Elevation Predicted 12/23/09	
Lake Chatuge	1918.40
Lake Nottely	1762.50
Blue Ridge	1669.30

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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.



Bring a new toy and golf

Brasstown Valley Resort & Spa continues to team up with the Marine Corps League's Toys-for-Tots campaign to help needy children. The Resort is offering special pricing on its mountain golf course to do so.

Bring a new, unwrapped toy with a value of at least \$10 between now and Dec. 23 to the Pro Shop at the Resort's Golf Club and enjoy a round of golf, including a cart for only \$25.

For more details, including tee times, contact Brasstown Valley Resort at (800)201-3205, or online at brasstownvalley.com.



White Christmas?

The National Weather Service is calling for a 40 percent chance of rain on Christmas Eve. That means there's little chance when residents wake up Christmas morning there will be a dusting of the white stuff.

Towns County hasn't seen a White Christmas since 1993.



Merry Christmas!



TCMS leads the region in CRCT scores

By Charles Duncan
TOWNS COUNTY HERALD
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Towns County Superintendent Dr. Richard Behrens got his Christmas present a little early.

Behrens was ecstatic over the performance of the Towns County Middle School students in the recent CRCT tests. Towns County middle school students led the 13-county region in Math scores and scored well above the state average.

"We're always excited with good scores," Dr. Behrens said. "The last few years we've been working really hard on the math area. When you work hard and get good results, it's always exciting."

The news gets better. Middle school students grades 6-8 scored in the top three schools in the 13-county region in pass rate for

CRCT testing. They also tied for second in Reading and third in English Language Arts in the 13-county region.

"We blew the roof off the CRCT scores," Dr. Behrens said. "We've got some great kids and families to work with. That's a large part of it."

"Our teachers work hard. From time-to-time, people will say good and bad things about them, but they are good teachers," he said.

"The students and parents are very supportive of our teachers from top to bottom."

Dr. Behrens said test scores go up and down over the years, so enjoy them while they're high.

"As small as our system is, the scores have a tendency to go up and down," he said. "We celebrate when they're up. I'm excited

for the staff, the kids and their families. This is a community effort. They all put a lot of work and effort into it. We keep pushing and trying to do the best that we can."

Overall, Towns County SAT scores are on the rise, amazing given that the school system was honored just last year with the Governor's Cup for the highest 3-year increase in SAT scores.

"Our overall academics have improved and our graduation rate is among the highest in the state," said Dr. Behrens.

Another amazing fact about the system's best and brightest: only 9 percent of incoming college freshman from Towns County Schools require remedial coursework.

"Because of that, it becomes quite obvious that



Dr. Richard Behrens is ecstatic over middle school CRCT test scores. TCMS led the 13-county region in math scores. Photo/Charles Duncan

there is quite a bit of money available to our kids when they go off to college," Dr. Behrens said. "More than 60 percent of Towns County seniors qualify for scholarships."

Last year alone, departing seniors walked off with more than \$1.045 million in scholarships.

All that and still, the school system maintains one of the lowest tax millage rates in the state, despite getting more than \$1.1 million less than local taxpayers are forced to pay the state based on the Quality Basic Education formula.

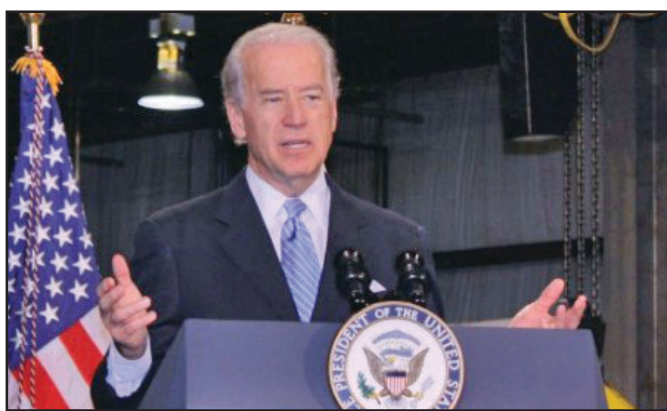
Broadband equals jobs

By Charles Duncan
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As 2009 comes to a close, District 50 State Sen. Jim Butterworth, (R-Clarkesville) is excited about the future.

The future looks bright because of a soon-to-be constructed 260-mile fiber optic cable line that will bring high-tech jobs to Northeast Georgia, especially Towns County.

U.S. Vice President Joe Biden came to Dawsonville last week to announce that North Georgia Network Cooperative (NGN) has been awarded \$33.5 million in federal stimulus funds to construct an ultra-high speed fiber optic trunk line network. Biden's announcement kicked off \$7.2 billion in Recovery Act broadband grant and loan programs, of which \$2 billion will be made available on a rolling basis over



More than \$33 million has been awarded to North Georgia Network Cooperative to build a 260-mile Information Super Highway in Northeast Georgia, Vice President Joe Biden announced last week in Dawsonville. Photo/Cathy Brooks

the next 75 days to bring high-speed Internet to communities that currently have little or no access to the technology.

The North Georgia Network completed an application with the National Telecommunications and Information Administration and to the OneGeorgia Authority to build the fiber-optic network. They will use resources from Atlanta Gas

Light and Ellijay Telephone as part of the project.

The ultra high-speed fiber optic cable line, expected to be completed over the next two years, will connect seven North Georgia counties Those counties include Towns, Union, Lumpkin, Rabun and White Counties.

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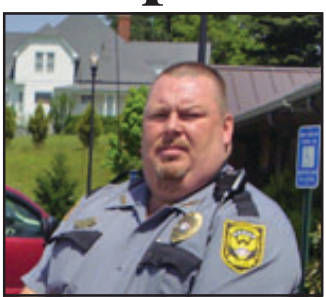
Shop with a Cop a huge success

By Matthew Jarrard
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Store aisles have yet to be filled with so many smiles this holiday season as there were last Thursday as Towns County's 2nd annual Shop-With-A-Cop treated 40 kids to a Walmart Christmas adventure they won't soon forget.

The program, which helps children in the community who are less fortunate, would not have been possible without the gracious year-round donations from town's very own citizens. Businesses, civic organizations, and funds from previous festive community events, such as the recent Halloween on the Square, made Christmas attainable for 24 more kids than from what was their initial count of 16.

As the young and thankful recipients waded



Chief Jimmy Wright

their way through the local Walmart they were chaperoned by community volunteers. And while they led the way through the packed shopping center, the 40 young boys and girls, not only shopped with a cop, but they also shopped with a conscience.

Connie Hoodenpyle from Towns County's Department of Family and Children Services noticed this amongst the young ladies in her group.

"I've actually had to encourage one of my girls

like you wouldn't believe to look around for more," she said. "She only wants to spend about \$25 worth. She's even bought cereal for the house."

Raymond George, a 2010 District Attorney candidate for Enotah Circuit, also saw the two boys in his group show immense, humble giving abilities.

"They're using what was given to them by giving to others, buying shoes and toys for their brothers and sisters," said George. "To see them light up today really allows you to get so much more than you put into it."

While goodwill was active, so was the electronic section as it was a clear favorite amongst the young men that afternoon. Clothing and music rang popular

See Shop, page 2A

Santa a hit at Shoney's of Hiawassee

By Matthew Jarrard
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Shoney's of Hiawassee was filled with a buffet of Christmas magic last Wednesday evening as Santa Claus extended holiday greetings to families dining out.

See Santa page 3A



Santa greeted visitors of all ages. Photo/Matthew Jarrard

Challenge creates cutting edge results

By Matthew Jarrard
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Thanks to the fundraising efforts of student organizations at the Blairsville campus of North Georgia Technical College, Larry Culpepper experienced a different kind of financial "cut" this Christmas season.

Culpepper, the Blairsville Campus Director, vowed to shave his head if the students' fundraising efforts made it to their goal of \$1,500. A generous portion of the earnings went to the Towns County Empty Stocking Fund, represented by Sheriff Chris Clinton, Rotary Clubs in Towns, Union and Fannin counties matched a percentage of each fundraiser's earnings.

"The Rotary clubs decided to match whatever we raised up to \$500 per club," explained Culpepper about the fundraising efforts. "So, if we hit \$1,500 they will put in \$500 each. We set the goal for \$1,500."

Their goal was met and as more holiday goodwill buzzed, so had the trimmers against Culpepper's



Larry Culpepper

nervous head. That's right, the Blairsville Campus director agreed to a buzz cut if the students met their goal. They did, and, you guessed it, Culpepper's locks hit the cutting room floor.

"My heart was in my throat the entire time," said Culpepper of his recent visit to the barber's chair. "I never thought it would come to this. But I have to say that I am extremely proud of these students and what they have accomplished."

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Floodplain hearing scheduled Jan. 21

By Charles Duncan
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The Federal Emergency Management Agency is rethinking its proposed floodplain maps for Lake Chatuge and Towns County.

Duncan Hastie, who helped prepare the proposed federal floodplain map revision, told Towns County Sole

at the 5:30 p.m., Jan. 21 Towns County Commission meeting at the Towns County Courthouse.

FEMA's decision to take another look comes on the heels of promised litigation by Commissioner Kendall if the agency failed to agree on a floodplain elevation level of 1,929 feet. The current floodplain elevation



Last week's floodplain hearings. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

Commissioner Bill Kendall on Monday that FEMA's state contractors are "evaluating some improvements" to the floodplain boundaries and will have a revised set of maps on hand

See Floodplain, page 10A

TOWNS COUNTY HERALD

