

2010 brings economic hope...from page 1A

provement, which has been put on hold indefinitely, the possibility of 150 to 500 new jobs is on the horizon. A clothing manufacturer has its eye on a very large building in Towns County and very well could bring a bevy of jobs to the local community.

The devil is in the detail, and those details haven't exactly been ironed out. Let's keep our fingers crossed that a deal is soon to be announced in the early going of 2010.

More construction jobs are on the way as Blue Ridge Mountain EMC continues to work toward the completion of its new facility near Brasstown Valley Resort. Projections have BRMEMC moving into the new facilities in 20 months. Construction began around the first of August. The EMC is expected to move into its new facilities in the summer of 2011. The original construction estimate was \$20 million, but with the eco-

nomie flatline, the final tally could come in about \$15 million.

Young Harris College continues its transition from a two-year institution to a four-year liberal arts college. Young Harris is in an unprecedented building program to support the anticipated growth of the college. A new 200-bed residence hall opened in August in time for the fall 2009 session.

The Board of Trustees has approved several additional buildings. These include a recreation center, a campus center, which will include a student center, dining hall and library, and an administration building. Additional buildings will follow in the next decade as part of a comprehensive master plan for the beautiful mountain campus.

All that construction means a lot of jobs.

The college also is adding faculty at a record pace. A dozen new faculty members

were hired for the 2008-2009 school year and a dozen more are slated to be brought on board for 2009-2010.

Tourism also is expected to rebound in 2010. The Moonshine Cruise-In is returning to Towns County for its second year. A community meeting is scheduled for 6 p.m. on Jan. 7 at Anderson Music Hall. Rakes Parrish, the founder and organizer of the fledgling event will be on hand to talk about the 2010 version.

The event, sponsored by the Towns County Tourism Association, attracted more than 5,000 show car enthusiasts. It's bound to be a hit again in 2010. The community is invited to attend the event at Anderson Music Hall.

On April 24th, more than 40 collegiate bass fishing teams will converge on Lake Chatuge to compete in the first collegiate bass tournament ever held on the 7,000-acre

lake. Teams that include Georgia Southern will take part in the bass tournament.

Look for more bass tournaments in 2010 and more college fisherman as the Young Harris College Mountain Lions' team is on the rise.

Young Harris College's bass fishing duo of Clint McNeal and Brad Rutherford will compete along with 24 other teams for a national collegiate title on the National Guard FLW College Fishing Tour April 10-12 in Knoxville, Tenn.

The Mountain Lions tandem finished fifth in the Southeast Regional at Lake Monroe on Nov. 23 in Sanford, Fla.

In 2011 and 2012, it looks like Hiawassee is the destination for the YAARAB Shriners' annual gathering, currently hosted in Helen.

The event, which brings Shriners from throughout the state, is a big draw for local businesses and hotels.

Bye-bye...from page 1A

believe that.

To make that happen, we need your help. We need you to keep reading our newspaper; we need businesses to patronize it with advertising and we need to continue encouraging and nurturing future readership.

To do that, we'll be busy in 2010. We'll continue to bring you the headlines that impact our community; we'll bring you more spotlights on businesses; we'll bring you stories about new jobs headed here; we'll expand the features on our education system; we'll showcase a law enforcement system that continues to keep crime at a minimum in our community.

And most of all, we'll keep you abreast of any news that impacts your pocketbook because we are the watchdogs of the taxpayer.

We want you to be a part of our newspaper family and we want you to have a Towns County Herald in your hand every week.

Because without you, our readers, we're just another piece of news print better suited to be at the bottom of a bird cage.

Thank you, our readers, for your loyal and unbridled patronage.

Charles Duncan is the editor of the Towns County Herald, the official Legal Organ of Towns County.

2009 almost in the books...from page 1A

medal in state wrestling competition.

In March, the Clay-Towns Development Authority voted to return 21 acres to the Towns County Industrial Development Authority with the catch that it must resolve the debts associated with the property.

The authority established a \$500,000 line of credit with United Community Bank of Hiawassee and did just that, finally reaching a settlement with Blairsville-based Colditz Trucking Company, who accepted a settlement of slightly more than \$350,000, including interest.

In April, Young Harris College broke ground on a new 57,000 square foot Recreation and Fitness Center designed to serve the entire YHC Campus population. The complex will include a fully equipped fitness center, an elevated track, a foodservice area/juice bar, three intramural basketball courts plus dance/aerobic rooms.

In May, the Towns County Herald launched its inaugural Web site. Front page stories, sports pages, opinion editorial pages, and photos are posted online every week. Advertisers can experience a special rate for online advertising. The move marked the newspaper's first venture onto the World Wide Web.

In June, Towns County Sheriff Chris Clinton said the innocence of youth is the most

likely factor leading to the accidental drowning of a 3-year-old child in Lake Chatuge. The child followed her favorite toy, a Spiderman ball, into the lake.

"This truly is a tragic situation," Sheriff Clinton said. "Anytime a child dies, it's always a tragedy. It's not supposed to happen to our babies."

In July, Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall told Lowe's Home Improvement that if they located in Towns County, they would do so without \$1 million in preferred tax breaks.

"I just didn't see giving tax breaks to Lowe's to get them in Towns County," Kendall said.

It made his decision an easy one when he determined that retail giants came up empty in their quest for tax breaks in neighboring communities.

Also in July, Sheriff Clinton dismissed two deputies involved in an early morning April 30th shooting incident in Young Harris. Sheriff Clinton said that deputies Aaron Beavers and Tracy Simmons violated Towns County Sheriff's Office policy when they used excessive force to try and stop a pickup truck from transporting a wounded and bleeding Trevor Shook from his family's residence.

In August, tourism got an unexpected boost from the first Mountain Moonshine Cruise-In. The Cruise-In, which is sponsored by the Towns

County Tourism Association, is a go for a second year at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds in 2010 and Chad Hooper, general manager of Ridges Resort said things will only get better. Hooper said that the second go-round, local businesses and governments will be even more ready for the event than the first go around.

"We've learned a lot from experience," Hooper said.

In September, Commissioner Kendall was ecstatic that Georgia Department of Transportation officials have saw fit to restore \$8 million in road improvement projects. For the most part, those projects had previously been eliminated due to state transportation budget issues. The return of these projects can be attributed to federal stimulus funding through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, Commissioner Kendall said.

In October, Willie Nelson rocked a packed Anderson Music Hall at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds. Afterward, Willie meandered through the crowd signing autographs and accepting a bottle of "Rebel Yell" with an appreciative smile. Nelson broke out in a huge smile as he autographed a copy of a bumper sticker that read: "Don't blame me, I voted for Willie."

In November, retired

educator Stephen Smith, a political newcomer, won in his first run for political office, taking the Hiawassee City Council seat of Annie Johnson. Smith was humble in acknowledging his victory over his longtime friend.

"I have nothing but respect for Annie; I admired her eight years of service to the city. She has been a true public servant," Smith said on election night.

On the same night, Incumbent Mayor Barbara Mathis was swept back into office in her Nov. 4th victory over political newcomer Chris Swett.

"I want to thank the residents of Hiawassee for having the confidence in me to serve them for four more years," Mathis said on election night.

In December, an early morning house fire on Scataway Road claimed the life of an elderly Hiawassee woman and her adult son. Towns County Fire Chief Mitch Floyd said that Ivallee Burrell, 82, and her son, Ernest Burrell, believed to be in his early 50s, perished in the early morning blaze at 581 Scataway Road. Ivallee Burrell's neighbor, Hiawassee Police Chief Jimmy Wright, reported the blaze and went inside the burning building to try and rescue the woman he had known all of his life and her son.

"I wish I could have done more," Chief Wright said in the aftermath.

New Year's...from page 1A

At the Ridges Country Club at Mountain Harbor, a New Year's Eve celebration begins at 8:30 p.m. For \$62.50 per person, dine on hors d'oeuvres that include chilled jumbo shrimp and smoked Scottish salmon. The Carving Station includes

roast steamship round of beef, honey glazed smoked ham and fresh baked rolls. Also, a breakfast buffet is served at midnight. The evening includes party favors, a DJ and dancing. Call (828) 389-4135 or (828) 389-0981 for more details.