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Indians top Schley County 68-58; head to second round

Towns County senior Will DeVries puts the exclamation point on the Indians' first round playoff victory.

By Jerry Kendall
Towns County Herald
Sports Writer

An 18-0 third quarter run led the Towns County Indians to their first state tournament win since 1974.

The Indians, playing in their first state tournament game since 2005 on Saturday night, used the strength of a spectacular 18-0 run within an overall 24-3 charge in third quarter action to claim a 68-58 home court victory over the visiting Schley County Wildcats of Ellaville, which is located some 15 miles north of Americus in southwest Georgia.

With the victory, the Indians qualified for a trip to Calhoun County High School in Edison, which is located some

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As the final buzzer sounds, the Indians celebrate their first State playoff victory in 43 years.

Preacher Ledford remembered for Christian leadership

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

When Pastor Harold Ledford passed away earlier this month, his loss was felt by an untold many in the mountains.

The longtime leader of Macedonia Baptist Church, where he had preached for 30 years this February, was a friend to the region, and his absence will surely be felt for years to come.

But the 71-year-old preacher, who spent his entire adult life spreading the word of Christ, wouldn't want people to grieve at his loss – he'd want them to rejoice at his ascension.

"Truly God has blessed us in so many wonderful ways," wrote Preacher Ledford. "Because of His great love for us and His many blessings upon us, I hope and pray that we as His people will grow even deeper in love with Him and for each other, and that we will remain totally committed to His will, His ways, and His work. To God be the Glory now and always."

Ledford, who preached in other North Georgia communities before settling in at Macedonia Baptist Church 30 years ago, had a reputation as being a community pastor, as he made it a steady practice to always practice what he preached.

"He sold out so many years ago to follow Jesus Christ, and he wanted to live his life as close to how Christ walked the earth," said Shannon Floyd, deacon chairman at Macedonia Baptist Church. "Pastor's foundation was truly that of the life that Jesus Christ lived.

"He passed that foundation on, and that's what he preached out, the love of God and God's love of people. I think that he exemplified that everywhere that he went."

From hospital visits down in Gainesville, Blairsville, and right here in Towns County, to making the rounds at all the tables when he'd stop in at a local restaurant, Preacher Ledford could always be counted on to share the Good News, all the while seeing if there was anything he could do for those in need.

And though his reach extended well beyond the borders of Towns County into the mountains that he loved, it was here that Ledford made his home as a loving husband, father and grandfather.

Beyond the innumerable weddings, baptisms and funerals overseen by Ledford in the last 30 years, he also drove a school bus for Towns County Schools for 30 years, exerting his calming influence as a mentor to countless schoolchildren and coworkers in the school system.

When the Towns County Board of Education and Schools Superintendent Dr. Darren Berrong learned that Ledford had passed on Saturday, Feb. 11, they decided to give everyone the day off Monday so that they could attend the funeral.

"Preacher meant a great deal to both the church and this community," said Bradley Thomas, associate and youth pastor at Macedonia Baptist. "As a selfless and humble servant, he never made it about himself but always the advancement of the Gospel.

"He has been called the community pastor many times due to his willingness to step in and help, regardless of whether a person attended church or not. He loved driving the bus, and it was a ministry to him."

Continued Pastor Thomas: "He enjoyed the students and was able to see a few entire generations grow up this way. Many times, I would hear him talk about how he transported a child, and years later was able to have their children on the bus, too. He also was able to care for his fellow bus drivers, and that meant a great deal to him."

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Pastor Harold Ledford

Enotah Garden Club continues Arbor Day tradition

The Enotah Garden Club celebrated 22 years of being a Tree City, with help from Young Harris City Hall and the Georgia Forestry Commission, on Thursday, Feb. 16.

See *Arbor Day, Page* 6A

State Rep. Matt Gurtler making headlines in Atlanta

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

ATLANTA – District 8 State Rep. Matt Gurtler is questioning the timing of a news story that broke last week about a 2013 arrest he settled days after being sworn in to elected office last month.

The arrest story from the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* came a day after another AJC article ran concerning an alleged threat from Gov. Nathan Deal's office.

WSB-TV Channel 2 also picked up the arrest story.

It all started on Feb. 13, when the AJC reached out to Gurtler for comment on a recent public exchange alleged to have occurred between Gurtler and the governor's office.

Gurtler responded to the Atlanta newspaper with the following statement, re-printed here in full:

"I attended a freshman legislators breakfast at the Governor's Mansion on the morning of Jan. 31, 2017, and was approached by Nathan Deal's Chief of Staff Chris Riley. I had never met Mr. Riley before that moment.

"Mr. Riley introduced himself and then asked my reasons for voting NO on the 2017 amended budget. I explained I opposed subsidies and government interference in the free market, and remarked that my constituents elected me to the Georgia House of Representatives to represent those values and principles.

"I was then immediately threatened by Mr. Riley.

"He stated he wanted me to be a 'YES vote on the 2018 budget,' and further stated, 'If you believe that then I will cut

Matt Gurtler, District 8 State Representative

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Roy Perren speaks on roles in BRMEMC, education

By Lily Avery
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

YOUNG HARRIS – Roy Perren, a prominent figure in the mountain community, highlighted his work with the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC and Mountain Education Charter High School when he spoke to the Mountain Movers and Shakers on Friday, Feb.17, at Mary's Southern Grill.

Perren is a wearer of many hats when it comes to community involvement. One of those includes his position as a director on the BRMEMC Board of Directors.

When discussing the latest happenings of the BRMEMC, Perren emphasized the board's desire to expand fiber optic internet opportunities to less populated areas, as well as the need to continue the push for more transparency between the BRMEMC and the membership.

Roy Perren

Perren explained where the region's fiber internet comes from and how the EMC funnels it to the area.

"The EMC is part owner of another business called the North Georgia Network," said Perren. "It brings in the fiber up here to North Georgia. We're in it. Habersham EMC is also in it. This fiber that we get, it comes from Marietta Street in Atlanta.

"There's a hub in Atlanta where the internet for the whole Southeast runs through. Our fiber that we get up here, is just as good as you could get in

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BOE gets CCRPI report card from schools

By Lily Avery
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

The College and Career Ready Performance Index, or CCRPI, was the primary focus of the Towns County Board of Education's monthly meeting on Monday, Feb. 13.

CCRPI is a comprehensive school improvement, accountability and communication platform for all educational stakeholders that aims to promote college and career readiness for all Georgia public school students, according to the Georgia Department of Education website.

These reports are designed to act as a replacement

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Dr. Darren Berrong, Towns County Schools Superintendent

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Lake Levels

Blue Ridge	1,683.13
Chatuge	1,923.39
Nottely	1,772.60

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Air-Med Meeting City Hall
February 24, 2017
10:00 AM

Mountain Regional Arts & Crafts Guild Youth Art Exhibit
See page 8B

Benefit for Dakota Collins and family
See page 5B

Baseball
Saturday, Feb. 25 Time TBA
vs Gilmer and Lumpkin (DH)

Soccer
Tuesday, Feb. 28
@ White County 5 & 7 p.m.