

# Festival...from Page 1A

This event is divided into adult and youth divisions, with each division giving a prize for the top three contestants.

During the last weekend of the festival, on Friday, Oct. 19, and Saturday, Oct. 20, Georgia's Official State Fiddlers' Convention will take place inside The Hall.

"Some of these fiddlers are thousand-dollar acts," said Thomason. "The group is Georgia's oldest and only convention of fiddlers."

Thomason invites the community out for the event and hopes that people will enjoy their time at the festival.

"It is such a great opportunity for families to come and enjoy," said Thomason. "You get all this entertainment for only \$12 on individual days. We want everyone to have a great time at the Fairgrounds."

Tickets for the festival are \$12 for a one-day pass, \$33



Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds General Manager Hilda Thomason. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

for a three-day pass, and \$90 for all nine days of the event.

Children 12 and under get into the festival for free, and veterans and active-duty service members will get

free entry into the festival on Tuesday, Oct. 16.

For more information on the festival, visit GeorgiaMountainFairgrounds.com.

# Wilkinson...from Page 1A



Sen. Wilkinson with the Towns County Pre-K Program on Oct. 2.

Photo by Mark Smith

organizations like Bright from the Start, a state-run program focused on early care and learning, to launch the Georgia Pre-K Week Program, now an annual event.

In recognition of Georgia Pre-K Week, State Sen. John Wilkinson made a special trip to Hiwassee on Tuesday, Oct. 2, to visit the 22 kids in the Ninth District Opportunity/Head Start Pre-K class on the campus of Towns County Schools.

Wilkinson visited with kids and toured the 21st Century Afterschool Program that afternoon as well.

"Really, one of the most rewarding and enjoyable things that I have the opportunity to do every year is to go to read to some of the pre-K classes around the district," said Wilkinson. "And it's been a real pleasure to be in Towns County this morning."

"It was a great class, and I probably enjoyed it better than they did. Reading is very important, and I hope that maybe this will spur their interest in reading as they continue with

their education."

The senator read from two pre-K books, "Click, Click, Moo: Cows That Type," by Doreen Cronin, and "Tap the Magic Tree," by Christie Matheson.

"Research consistently shows that children entering kindergarten from quality early learning settings are more prepared and ready to learn, which our leaders see firsthand during Pre-K Week," said Erica Fener Sitkoff, executive director of Voices for Georgia's Children.

Mary Beth Moss, director of the Towns County Pre-K Program, said the goal, ultimately, is to promote literacy among the very young, thereby giving them a hand up when they begin their formal education.

In addition to Sen. Wilkinson reading to them, Moss also read to her pre-K students, and the kindergarten and first-grade classes came over and read to them, too. As a finale for the week, the group made "green goop" as a fun

activity.

Jenny Stowers, program director of the 21st Century Afterschool Program in Towns County, said the students had a great time with Sen. Wilkinson, showing off their cooking skills, among other things.

On hand to greet the senator was Superintendent Dr. Darren Berrong, Elementary School Principal Dr. Sandra Page, Middle School Principal Erica Chastain and Family Connection Coordinator Amy Gibby Rosser.

Stowers said the 21st Century Afterschool Program at Towns County was selected by the Georgia Statewide Afterschool Network as a model program for Sen. Wilkinson to visit.

The Ninth District Opportunity/Head Start Pre-K Program and the 21st Century Afterschool Program are both reflective of the excellent stewardship of the school system.

Georgia Pre-K continues to be funded by the Georgia Lottery.

# Voting...from Page 1A

government issued photo ID, including one issued by the Department of Driver Services or your Voter Registrar; valid U.S. passport; valid employee photo ID from any branch, department, agency, or entity of the U.S. Government, this state, or any county, municipality, board, authority or other entity of this state; valid U.S. military photo ID; valid tribal photo ID."

Voters looking for absentee ballots will need to contact the board office, which is situated next to the Towns County Courthouse, or call (706) 896-4353.

Tuesday, Oct. 9, was the voter registration deadline to be eligible to cast a ballot in the Nov. 6 General Election.

Each of the following candidates will appear on the ballot:

For Governor, Republican Brian Kemp, Democrat Stacey Abrams and Libertarian Ted Metz.

For Lieutenant Governor, Republican Geoff Duncan and Democrat Sarah Riggs Amico.

For Secretary of State, Republican Brad Raffensperger, Democrat Josh Barrow and Libertarian Smythe Duval.

For Attorney General, Republican Incumbent Chris Carr and Democrat Charlie Bailey.

For Commissioner of Agriculture, Republican Incumbent Gary Black and Democrat Fred Swann.

For Commissioner of Insurance, Republican Jim Beck, Democrat Janice Laws and Libertarian Donnie Foster.

For State School

Superintendent, Republican Incumbent Richard Woods and Democrat Otha E. Thornton Jr.

For Commissioner of Labor, Republican Incumbent Mark Butler and Democrat Richard Keatley.

For Public Service Commissioner District 3, Republican Incumbent Chuck Eaton, Democrat Lindy Miller and Libertarian Ryan Graham.

For Public Service Commissioner District 5, Republican Incumbent Tricia Pridemore, Democrat Dawn A. Randolph and Libertarian John Turpish.

For U.S. Representative in 116th Congress from the 9th Congressional District of Georgia, Republican Incumbent Doug Collins and Democrat Josh McCall.

For State Senator from the 50th District, Republican Incumbent John Wilkinson is running unopposed.

For State Representative in the General Assembly from the 8th District, Republican Incumbent Matt Gurtler is running unopposed.

For District Attorney of the Enotah Judicial Circuit, Republican Incumbent Jeff Langley is running unopposed.

For Blue Ridge Mountain Soil and Water Conservation District Supervisor, no one is running.

A pair of alcohol referendums will appear on the Nov. 6 General Election Ballot as well, one for all Towns County voters and another for Hiwassee residents only.

All Towns County registered voters will get a

chance to vote for or against on-premises liquor by the drink sales.

If voters approve the measure, the establishment of liquor licenses will be regulated by county ordinance, which will determine the hours and other parameters of liquor by the drink sales, excluding Sunday sales altogether.

As for the Hiwassee-specific alcohol referendum, all registered Hiwassee voters will be able to vote on a measure that would move the start time of alcohol sales by the drink from 12:30 p.m. to 11 a.m. on Sundays.

Also on the ballot are five Proposed Constitutional Amendments, including: the creation of the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Trust Fund to protect water quality, wildlife habitats and parks; the creation of a statewide business court to lower costs, enhance efficiency and promote predictable judicial outcomes; the encouragement of the conservation, sustainability and longevity of Georgia's working forests through tax sub-classification and grants; the provision of rights for victims of crime in the judicial process; and the authorization of fair allocation of sales tax proceeds to county and city school districts.

Further, there will be two Proposed Statewide Referenda on the ballot, one providing for a homestead exemption for residents of certain municipal corporations, and another providing a tax exemption for certain homes for the mentally disabled.

Of course, voters will want to more fully familiarize themselves with the language of the amendments and referenda before voting.

# Young Harris...from Page 1A

and are constantly having to be replaced, which costs the city money that could be better used elsewhere.

Recently, the Zeta Pi fraternity of Young Harris College volunteered to adopt Thomas Town Road and Cupid Falls Park for litter cleanup.

J.C. Berrong of Towns County Clean-Up had a sign made up by the county showing that the road had been adopted by Zeta Pi.

City workers put the sign up just past the Recreation Building on Thomas Town Road on Sept. 27, and by the next morning, the sign had been completely pulled up.

Someone also hit a stop sign with a vehicle and took it.

City hall contacted the Towns County Sheriff's Office and filed a report, and the Sheriff's Office informed city officials that stealing signs was a crime punishable by up to a year in jail and a \$1,000 fine.

The Sheriff's Office notified the Young Harris College Police Department, and the city has notified YHC President Drew Van Horn of the situation.

In turn, the city said Van Horn has asked Student Development to inform students of the risks, dangers and penalties involved if anyone is caught taking road signs from city and county streets.

In other business, the



Reid Dyer of Hayes James Engineers, Planners & Surveyors in the Oct. 2 meeting. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

council set a budget hearing for Tuesday, Nov. 6, at 6:50 p.m.

The council held the second reading and subsequent adoption of the amended sign ordinance, which featured changes to include:

The creation of a 45-day window in which to act on sign applications; the removal of the requirement of a sign permit to fly a flag; and the limiting of banner signs to 60 square feet in size.

Councilmembers held a second reading and subsequent adoption of the proposed rate structure ordinance for a 4-inch residential water/sewer rate.

The council also talked about getting either iPads or

computer notebooks to keep from having to print so much and to allow members to review materials before meetings.

Mayor Gibby asked that councilmembers decide what they want to do about acquiring the technology by the end of the year.

In August, the council decided to impose a 91-day moratorium on land disturbance permits, building permits and special-use permits, with an exception for single-family detached housing permits, effective Aug. 7, 2018.

The moratorium is allowing the Young Harris Planning Commission time to clean up the city zoning ordinance to get a better handle on drainage issues associated with construction.

Councilman Clark touched on the zoning ordinance in the October meeting, suggesting that the best time for the Planning Commission to consider a building permit would be before a land disturbance permit was issued.

With his background in civil engineering and past experience on the Planning Commission, Clark explained that waiting until after the land disturbance permit is issued to look at a building permit, which is the way it is done now, makes it more difficult to plan.

City Attorney Marvin Harkins said he would make the suggested changes to the language of the zoning ordinance.

# Fire...from Page 1A

time change gets here," said Towns County Fire Chief Harold Copeland. "We are going to take two tankers and practice keeping the water flow going to each truck so that we can ensure we get enough water to put out a potentially large fire."

"We also want to practice using the ladders to scale multistory buildings, so we will use the top of the building as an attic. Two ladders are used so we can simulate the scenario of one exit being blocked by a collapse, and those inside can have another way out."

With two fire engines, two tankers and a ladder truck, the firefighters were ready to begin their simulations.

The simulations called for those gathered to be divided into teams to complete various tasks, such as going in the main floor with a hose, climbing the ladders to simulate the attic, and using the ladder truck to simulate the instance of a person being stuck in a top floor window.

These firefighters worked for a couple of hours to practice the large-scale scenario, and each job posed its own challenges.

Team members needed to worry about the water supply being consistent, the trucks being placed in appropriate spots, the ladders being stable, and the right sized hoses to reach into the building.

The firefighters also had to learn the importance of working together and thinking about each situation without the chief or other authority there to help them.

"I can't always be there to tell you what to do," said Copeland. "You all need to think about what needs to happen and how you can fix the problem. You need to think about each other, and the best way to care



Firefighters doing ladder training at the Old Rec Gym on Monday, Oct. 1. Photo by Jarrett Whitener



Two Towns County Firefighters training on Oct. 1. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

for the situation in the safest way."

After the teams finished their simulations, they gathered to hear what they did well and where they needed to improve.

"We did not have a hydrant near us, so we needed to make sure the tankers stayed full and water got shuttled to where it was needed most," said Copeland. "I am proud of the team, and they did a great job today. "This is where we learn

all of our mistakes and we work on fixing them, so we can ensure that when a real fire happens, we can be ready to put it out as quickly and effectively as possible."

The Towns County Fire Department plans to do another simulation before November's time change, and firefighters will work to improve on the few mistakes that were made in this training session.

# BOE...from Page 1A

a final review and approval before a check is issued, and no timeframe was given.

As such, the school system will likely be taking out what's known as a Tax Anticipation Note. The note is already lined up at the bank and would help the system to finance current operations ahead of modernization funds arriving from the state, which in turn would be used to pay off the note.

"We're just waiting to get the final word from the DOE on what they project," said Underwood.

Originally, the

modernization project that took place over the summer was supposed to cost \$3.6 million, though the final cost ended up being about \$3.4 million, or \$200,000 less than projected.

With a modernization grant reimbursement of \$2.3 million, the system will be getting about 68 percent of project costs back, which is right in line with what Berrong had anticipated earlier in the year.

For his part, Berrong said that Towns County Schools and his office were fortunate "to have the financial team that we have."

# Arrests...from Page 1A

Smith, 44, of Blairsville, and Thomas Dexter Shook, 42, of Hiwassee, each on the following charges: manufacturing marijuana, felony possession of marijuana, and possession of drug-related objects.

All suspects were being held without bond at press time.

The case will be transferred to the Enotah Judicial Circuit District Attorney's Office for prosecution.

All suspects are presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

"Schools around us who are having issues with their (financials) come to us to get help," said Berrong. "There's so much time and knowledge that goes into this. I've got a general sense of these things, but it's insane how much you have to know to get this stuff right."

In other news, Berrong said the upper baseball field is draining, though there is a section in deep left field that is brown and looks like it may have gone into hibernation early.

And while the schools won't know if it's a problem until next spring, "if anyone asks, we're playing on that field," said Berrong.