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Celebrate Christmas with lights at the Fairgrounds

By Lily Avery
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Christmas is less than a month away, and helping to create a fun, spirit-filled environment of joy and wonder is none other than the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds with its "Mountain Country Christmas in Lights!"

Officially debuted on Thanksgiving night, the show is a unique affair that the North Georgia Mountains has never seen before, until now.

Though it only opened a week ago, the light show has already garnered over 1,500 visitors, with more than 500 people in attendance on opening night alone.

"It's been fabulous," said Fairgrounds General Manager Hilda Thomason. "We've had good attendance each night and the people have enjoyed it and the children have seemed

to really enjoy it, especially getting to see Santa Claus.

"All the businesses and the civic organizations and the churches and the crafters have come together to help fill all the booths up and make it beautiful.

"The first night, Thursday night, we had 588 people in attendance that paid, that's not including the under 12 years old that's free. Friday night we had 610 people and Saturday night we had 422. On average, we're bringing in about 500 people a night.

"I didn't really have anything to compare it to because we haven't done anything like this before. I think it's been very good, I didn't really know what to expect.

"I knew it wouldn't be like the fair where there would be thousands and thousands of people come through the gate, but for the first year, it's been

really good. I think, as it gets closer to Christmas, it'll start to pick up more too."

Walking through the gates of the fairgrounds, Christmas music floats through the air and patrons can meander through the self-guided light tour, stopping in to see the many crafters set up throughout the fairgrounds and hear the sweet crooning of live holiday carolers.

Down at the Exhibit Hall guests are treated to holiday classics on antique organs, performed by Towns County Historian Jerry Taylor.

Hot chocolate, cider, snacks and more are also available for purchase while visiting the fairgrounds.

And of course, no Christmas extravaganza would be complete without the jolly old man himself, Santa Claus, along with Mrs. Claus, for children to stop in and share their Christmas lists and have

their photos taken with Father Christmas.

With the addition of the light show, it is not hard to see that the holiday spirit is in full force this year, something Tammy Hollingshead of Always Christmas in Hiwassee has definitely enjoyed while working her booth during the event.

"There have been so many people coming through," said Hollingshead. "We've had a lot of good experience with this. I think this is awesome and wonderful. I hope that, year-by-year, it can grow bigger and bigger and more lights and people, and become a real destination for the wintertime.

"It definitely adds to the holiday spirit. Everyone seems to be so happy and joyful walking through. It creates a good mood for people when



"Who are you?" Clark Ingram, 7 months old, with Santa Claus at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds. This will be young Clark's first Christmas. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

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Sheriff leads parade, Enotah CASA lights up square

By Lily Avery
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

The Towns County Sheriff's Office held its annual Christmas Parade on Saturday, Nov. 26, and with Sheriff Chris Clinton in the lead, a line of cars, floats, marchers and horses headed out of the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds and down Main Street to the Hiwassee Square.

The parade is representative of the start of the Sheriff's Empty Stocking Fund, which seeks to give underprivileged kids toys for Christmas.

Parade participants were asked to make a donation of toys or money toward the Empty Stocking Toy Drive.

Each year, participants create a parade based on a

See Parade, Page 1B



This "Frozen" float from National Title Pawn won First Place in the 2016 Sheriff's Christmas Parade. 2nd Place: SERVPRO, 3rd Place: Towns County Lions Club. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

A thankful fire department still accepting donations

By Lily Avery
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Over the last few months, the North Georgia Mountains have experienced more wildfires than ever before, brought on by a record-breaking drought season and unseasonably hot weather.

Due to these conditions, the Towns County Fire & Rescue team has been spending long hours away from home, battling the flames and doing its best to keep the residents of the community safe from harm's way.

With the help of the U.S. Forest Service, the fires have become contained and more manageable, though they are now spreading even further into the North Carolina Nantahala Wilderness, with tough terrain that can make



Towns County Fire is thankful for donations during the wildfire epidemic. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

flame containment more strenuous than before.

However, according to 911 Mapping Director Marty Roberts, Towns County is no longer at risk at this time.

"As far as Towns County goes, Upper Hiwassee and Tate City are really good," said Roberts. "The problem

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Commissioner cautions city council on variance issue

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

YOUNG HARRIS – Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall has decided not to grant an exemption for a height variance to a private developer looking to build a student housing complex in Young Harris.

Plans for the proposed building call for a 55-foot-tall structure, and the service district agreement between the county and the city only allows for fire service to buildings up to 35 feet in height, as determined by ISO guidelines.

"The county and each city will maintain the 35-foot

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Young Harris City Council members Samuel Leslie, Dr. John Kelley and Angela Smith in the November city council meeting.

Ordiales graduates from Academy of Economic Development

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Hiwassee City Councilwoman Liz Ordiales graduated recently from the Georgia Academy of Economic Development, an accomplishment that highlights her commitment to pursuing economic opportunities within the city and county.

The Academy offers a training program designed to put community resources into the hands of those who would use them, such as Ordiales.

"This organization is truly fantastic," said Ordiales, who attended four all-day classes over the course of four months in Clarkesville.

The big takeaway for me

See Ordiales, Page 1B



Hiwassee City Councilwoman Liz Ordiales recently graduated from the Georgia Academy of Economic Development. Pictured here with Carrie Barnes and Rope Roberts.

Farm Service is helping livestock producers during drought

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

BLAIRSVILLE – Perhaps no other profession is hit harder by drought than the farmer – crops don't grow as well, streams begin to dry, and feeding livestock becomes increasingly difficult on land that won't support grazing.

During drought, livestock producers often have to make hard decisions about selling livestock they can no longer feed, or they have to start feeding livestock hay earlier than if drought conditions had not been present.

This is problematic because it cuts into the bottom line of the producer.

When a livestock producer has to sell livestock during drought, those livestock don't



Kevin Thomas of the Farm Service Agency. His office, located in the Haralson Memorial Civic Center, oversees Union, Towns, Fannin and Gilmer counties.

usually get top dollar, and when the producer attempts to get their herd back up the following year, it can cost them more than

they sold their livestock for previously.

See Livestock, Page 6A

Amid drought, city urges water customers to conserve

News Special

On Nov. 21, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources announced that the City of Hiwassee and Towns County were under a Level 1 Drought Declaration.

Mayor Barbara Mathis is urging all Hiwassee Water Customers to take the following actions to conserve water during this current drought.

The following information is provided by Georgia DNR.

Drought Tips:
How You Can Conserve Water Indoors.

From the kitchen, to the bathroom to the laundry room, changing your habits can help Georgia conserve a vital



Mayor Barbara Mathis

resource and save you money on your water bill. Water consumption can be reduced easily at little or no cost. Water conservation saves energy too. Energy needed to heat water and run appliances.

Looking for ways to cut down on your indoor water use? Follow the tips listed below to help your community save water during the current drought.

General:
Never pour water down the drain. There are other uses for it.

Repair dripping faucets by replacing washers. Every drop counts!

Check all plumbing for leaks. Have leaks repaired by a plumber.

Retire all household faucets by installing aerators with flow restrictors.

Install an instant hot water heater on your sink.

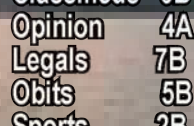
Install a water-softening system only when the minerals

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Lake Levels
Blue Ridge 1,665.72
Chatuge 1,916.27
Nottely 1,758.11



Christmas Inspired Historical Society Meeting
See page 3A

Lighting the Love Light Tree
See page 6A

Sponsor a Foster Child for Christmas
See page 8B

Basketball
Tues. Nov 29 vs. Fannin 6 & 7:30 PM
Fri. Dec 2 @ Providence Christian 7 & 8:30
Sat. Dec 3 vs. Union 6 & 7:30 PM