

# Burn Ban...from Page 1A

National Forests this fall.”  
 And though rain may be putting out fires in leaf litter and other small piles of vegetation, larger fuels like stumps and standing dead trees, called hot spots, could continue to smolder deep within. This could cause the re-ignition of fires should vegetation become dry again.  
 The U.S. Forest Service continues to monitor fires that are becoming more and more contained, with Burned Area Emergency Response teams assessing ecological damage and developing ongoing

recovery plans.  
 The Rock Mountain Fire, which previously threatened Tate City with encroaching wildfire, was reported to be 95 percent contained as of press time Monday, with officials reporting 24,725 total acres burned. Of those acres, approximately 12,962 were in Georgia, including 11,111 acres in Rabun County and 1,851 acres in Towns County.  
 The Rough Ridge fire was also at 95 percent contained as of press time Monday, having burned nearly 30,000 acres of the Cohutta

Wilderness in Fannin County.  
 Fortunately, there was no loss of life and no structure damage in any of North Georgia's recent wildfires, and for the most part fire teams have begun to demobilize thanks to the heroic containment efforts of hundreds of firefighters.  
 The *Towns County Herald* extends its deepest condolences to the residents of Gatlinburg, Tennessee, for the many lives lost and damage caused in the wildfire that ravaged parts of that beautiful city.

# Fairgrounds...from Page 1A

decorations as well.  
 “I make all my own designs,” said Garcia. “I’ve been sewing all my life. You can do anything you want with machine embroidery. You draw it and you can turn it into any kind of design that you want. You can use any colors that you want. The imagination is just unlimited. These are small works of art and I can make anything that I want.”  
 Garcia has been selling at the fairgrounds for going on 28 years, participating in the Fall Festival every year, and couldn’t possibly imagine not being part of the first of many light shows to come.  
 “When it was first being talked about, I immediately said I was in,” said Garcia. “This is the hometown show for me. I’m in. So far, I absolutely love it.”



Alan Kendall, photo by Lowell Nicholson

“I think it’s going to get bigger and better every year. Hilda (Thomason) has done a killer job with this, and everyone involved has done a wonderful job setting this up. It’s just a great thing for the community, and I’m so glad to be a part of it.”  
 For those who are fiber arts enthusiasts but want something for a canine companion, Kim Harper of Stella’s Attic, stationed just down the way from Garcia, is offering handmade dog coats, among many other things, for patrons to snatch up for the cold weather season.  
 “I don’t do anything anywhere else, I just do craft shows,” said Harper. “It’s something I do on my own time.”



Mr. and Mrs. Claus await the children of Towns County at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

“I have dogs, so I started making the dog coats for them and then started selling them. I do really well, especially when I take them to Florida. They’re just fun. They’re fun to make and fun to sell.”  
 This holiday season is Harper’s first go of selling at the fairgrounds, something she says has been a fun experience and she looks forward to the coming weeks of the light show.  
 “I think the show is great,” said Harper. “I think the area needed something like this a long time ago. It’s nice to come out and see the lights and watch the kids have a good time.”



Laura Mauldin sells candied and caramel apples during the Mountain Country Christmas at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds. Photo Lowell/Nicholson

Plenty of area groups and civic organizations also set up shop at the light show, such as the Towns County 4-H Club that is selling freshly-made funnel cakes to help raise funds for the newly revamped program.



Towns County Historian Jerry Taylor plays a reed organ from the 1800s during the “Mountain Country Christmas in Lights!” Photo/Lowell Nicholson

Also, members of the Towns Union Master Gardener Association, the Hiawassee Garden Club and Towns County 4-H Garden Club teamed up to offer gift options for those with a green thumb, or for those who wish to support the efforts these organizations make toward preserving the beautiful landscape of the mountain region.  
 All of the vendors can be found at the “Mountain Country Christmas in Lights!” show every week, Thursday through Sunday, from 6 p.m. until 10 p.m., from now until New Year’s Day. Tickets for the show are \$5 per person, or \$4 per person for groups of 15 people or more, and all children under 12 get in for free.



Raven and Red performed Friday, Dec. 2, at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds during its Christmas light show. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

# Love Lights...from Page 1A



The Chatsuge Regional Hospital Auxiliary has been lighting the Love Light Tree for decades, most recently on Thursday, Dec. 1. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

wishing to pursue medical professions after graduation.  
 The auxiliary, composed of about 35 volunteers, works in the hospital to ensure smooth experiences for patients and visitors. Volunteers greet visitors at the front, get them where they need to go, and generally serve as a reservoir of knowledge pertaining to the hospital.



Rev. David Tinsley of Sharp Memorial United Methodist Church delivered a special Christmas message during the program. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

Auxiliary members also work out of the Chatsuge Regional Nursing Home, assisting residents in various activities, and the volunteers give countless hours the year round toward volunteerism and fundraising for the hospital.  
 The group’s biggest fundraiser each year takes place during the Georgia Mountain Fair in July, when auxiliary members run the Fudge Booth.

students apply, and they’re all very deserving,” said Hancock. “Our committee that reviews all of their paperwork spends about three months doing that, and chooses from three to five students.”  
 Hancock invited those gathered, and by extension the entire community, to pitch in and help out with the Love Light Scholarship by donating in memory of or in honor of a loved one.

Money from their fundraising efforts, aside from the Love Light Scholarship Program, allows the auxiliary to supply equipment to the hospital and nursing home that may not fit in the official budget.

This year’s Love Light Celebration featured a warm welcome from Auxiliary President Golda Sanders, who introduced John Mark Gordon, head administrator at the nursing home.

“I want to thank everybody for coming tonight,” said Gordon. “This is our second time here in the remodeled lobby. We are so blessed to have this facility, and I hope everybody in Hiawassee and the surrounding area recognizes how fortunate we are to even have a hospital in this small community.”

Rev. David Tinsley of Sharp Memorial United Methodist Church in Young Harris prayed over the event, before Dr. Robert Stahlkuppe led the lighting of the tree, this year carried out by Barry Huffman of the hospital staff. Rev. Tinsley then cheered everyone’s spirits with a Christmas message of forgiveness and understanding.

“I was thinking a little earlier about the scholarship fund, and it’s a great opportunity to send one of our local students to have a health care education, and hopefully they stay in the community and work here, hopefully with us.”

Entertainment that evening was provided by none other than the Sharp Tones, a mixed singing group out of Sharp Memorial that also includes Love Light Chairwoman Hancock.

Love Light Chairwoman Kathy Hancock, who has held that title for the second year now, shared some of the history of the Love Light program, about how Dr. John Acree and his wife Sara wanted to help local students enter into medical professions.  
 “Usually about 20 or so

of the ceremony.  
 In years past, the tree lighting took place outside with an actual tree donated by Sara Acree in honor of her husband Dr. John Acree. That tree had to come down when Chatsuge Regional underwent its renovations a couple of years ago.  
 Now, the auxiliary puts out a tree with decorations in the main lobby each Christmas season, to be lit on the night of the annual Love Light Ceremony.



The Sharp Tones performed their colorful variety Christmas show at the lighting, for the second year in a row. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

The Sharp Tones are led by Pam Leslie, with live keyboard provided by Angela Holloway.  
 Donations made in loving memory leading up to the program were in the names of: Harold London, Truett Owenby, Deborah Saylor, Elliott Sanders, Amy King, Tommie Hancock, Liz Garrett, Linda Rubenstein, Ron Abrams, Judy Allen, Billy Fielder, Annie McGaha, Gloria Hitchcock, Cora Rhodes Lyles, Frank Stahlkuppe, Gene Mitchell, David London, Shepherd Weinsig, Pauline “Polly” Taylor, Clement Darracott, B.J. Peters, Amy Black, Judi Anderson, Aunt Dell Martin, and Rose Stahlkuppe.  
 “In honor of” donations were made in the names of: Suzanne Paston, Sally Varao, the Hancock Children and Grandchildren, Rev. David Tinsley, the Sharp Tones, Pam Leslie and Angela Holloway.

Refreshments, supplied by auxiliary members and featuring a beautiful cake, were had by all following the close