

Towns County Herald

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Towns County egg hunt an Easter tradition

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Thirty-four years and 34 Easter Egg Hunts later, it's safe to say that the Towns County Recreation Department's annual hunt is something of a tradition.

"We've been doing it probably since about 1982," said Recreation Director Wes Hooper, who has been with the Rec Department for 40 years next year. "We used to hide real eggs. We'd have to boil them, and then we'd dye them, the Rec Department would, and then we'd bring them out here and hide them."

"But through the age of technology, plastic came in, and we've gone to plastic, pre-made that we order. This year we ordered 3,500 eggs, and we put them out to two different age groups: 4, 5 and 6-year-olds, and 7, 8 and 9-year-olds. We also had 26 special prize eggs, which the



Photos by Lowell Nicholson

prizes consisted of Easter baskets."

The egg hunt, which takes place on the day

before Easter every year at the Mountain Fairgrounds, featured a robust turnout this

year. Nearly 200 children

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Rep. Collins and Windstream CEO Thomas to meet May 9

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Windstream President and CEO Tony Thomas will meet with U.S. Rep. Doug Collins in his 9th Congressional District on Monday, May 9, according to Scott Morris, a Windstream senior adviser in corporate affairs.

An exact meeting location has not been finalized, though Habersham County has been tentatively suggested, according to a representative in Congressman Collins' office.

The two will be meeting to discuss the complaints laid out in a series of communications between his office and Windstream in recent weeks, including the following items from the initial Feb. 11 letter Rep. Collins sent to Thomas:

"1. I am concerned that your networks in Northeast Georgia are at over-capacity.



Tony Thomas

Would you agree with this assessment? If not, please provide documentation demonstrating that Northeast Georgia networks specifically are not operating at over-capacity. If they are, please outline your plan to address this situation.

"2. Please provide a detailed status update regarding Windstream's



Rep. Doug Collins

progress upgrading your copper networks to modern fiber in Northeast Georgia. Specifically, what percentage of the copper network has been replaced and what is the timeline for full replacement with modern fiber?"

"3. Of the fees that you currently collect from

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City of Hiawasse Downtown Development Group in the works

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Hiawasse City Councilwoman Liz Ordiales held an informational meeting earlier this month at the Towns County Civic Center.

The meeting was focused on the creation of a Downtown Development Group for the city of Hiawasse, and Ordiales invited 200 businesses located "between the bridges" within city limits to attend the meeting in order to "come up with ideas to revitalize the downtown area."

See Downtown, Page 9A



Hiawasse City Councilwoman Liz Ordiales delivers a PowerPoint presentation to a group of businesses and community stakeholders on Tuesday, March 8, at the Towns County Civic Center

Yoakam/Whipkey grace The Hall April 2

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Legendary Country Music artist Dwight Yoakam is headlining Anderson Music Hall this Saturday, April 2, and while tickets remain, they're selling fast.

Opening up for the Honky Tonk musician is Nebraska, native Matt Whipkey, who, like Yoakam, doesn't necessarily conform to one genre or audience.

"I always kind of tell people we're American Rock 'n' Roll, and if you think about it, that brings to mind a lot of different styles and sounds," said Whipkey. "Like singer/songwriter, maybe Alternative Country, Country Rock, and we also do more straight ahead Rock."

Yoakam and Whipkey are both promoting recently released albums on this tour

– Yoakam with "Second Hand" and Whipkey with "Underwater."

This will be Whipkey and his band's 18th or 19th performance with Yoakam since last year, and they have been more than happy warming crowds up for the man who pioneered "hillbilly music."

"When you're an opening act, you can go two routes," said Whipkey. "You can go the route of being just like the person you're working with, or being something kind of different. And I wouldn't say we're totally different."

"I know on this tour, on these shows we've been doing with Dwight, a lot of his newer stuff is more in line with some of the things that we do, more kind of like the Pop Rock driven, Byrds-y, kind of Big Star almost sounding stuff. That's more up our alley, and his newer records have



Matt Whipkey of Omaha, Nebraska, will be bringing his "Midwestern Rock" aesthetic to complement Country Music Legend Dwight Yoakam's signature sound on Saturday, April 2, in Hiawasse. Photo by Kevin Franz

that harder edge, Rock feel to them."

Whipkey has recorded

See Yoakam, Page 9A

FBLA students advance to nationals



TCHS students at the State Leadership Conference in Athens – seven students will represent Towns County and the state of Georgia in the National Leadership Conference this summer.

By Chase Williams
TCHS FBLA Reporter

Georgia Future Business Leaders of America held the State Leadership Conference

and Competitive Events at the UGA Classic Center from Wednesday, March 6, through Friday, March 8, where 30 members from Towns

County FBLA competed in 15 different individual, skill and performance business events.

See FBLA, Page 9A

VFW honors students in essay contests

By Mason Mitcham
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

The National Veterans of Foreign Wars organization recently held its annual essay contests, the Patriot's Pen and Voice of Democracy, and two Towns County students were honored in the schools for their patriotic contributions on Tuesday, March 22.

According to VFW District 2 Commander Richard Hack, the goal of the essay programs is to help promote patriotism through youth writings.

Contestants can win at

See VFW, Page 9A



Members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars association recognized Audrey Goeltz as local winner and regional runner-up for the Patriot's Pen contest.

May 24 ballot to feature E-SPLOST referendum

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

It's official – per the Towns County Board of Elections, the proposed E-SPLOST put forward by the Towns County Board of Education will be on the ballot for the May 24 General Primary Election.

The E-SPLOST, or Education Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax, would be a 1 percent sales and use tax that, if passed, would raise the local sales tax to 8 cents on the dollar county-wide.

Most E-SPLOSTs in Georgia run for a total of five years, but Dr. Darren Berrong, superintendent of Towns County Schools, said that this SPLOST would only run for four years with a goal of collecting \$8.5 million, though it is only projected to collect \$7 million at current SPLOST collection rates.

Dr. Berrong said that the money raised would be used to fund costly major maintenance projects at the schools, including the installment of a new roof to both the high and middle schools, around \$800,000, as well as a complete overhaul of the fire alarm systems, another \$500,000, crucial updates to outdated technology currently in use by students, \$600,000, and major HVAC improvements across the board, relighting, rewiring and more.

"I've heard mostly positive comments," said Dr. Berrong. "Of course, the biggest negative to passing the SPLOST is that we would have an increase in sales tax in the county up to 8 cents, where it's 7 cents at the moment."

He went on to add, however, that instead of raising the millage rate – which he said he was unlikely to do regardless of the SPLOST referendum outcome in May



Dr. Darren Berrong – he'd rather let tourists and visitors to the community help pay for the SPLOST than put that extra burden directly to property owners.

And Dr. Berrong has done his homework on SPLOST funding around the state, noting that 45 of 159 counties in Georgia have an 8 cent sales tax, and with Towns

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