

Towns County Herald

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Publication Number 635540 Volume 84 Number 24

Wednesday, April 17, 2013

Local Weather and Lake Levels

Thu: Clouds	76 57
Fri: Rain	64 40
Sat: Sunny	63 39
Sun: Sunny	66 42
Mon: Clouds	67 43
Tues: Rain	67 43
Wed: Sunny	66 43



Upstream Elevation Predicted	04/17/13
Lake Chatuge	1923.00
Lake Nottely	1771.10
Blue Ridge	1686.13

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Sports Page 8A



Sheriff's Forum

April 23 • 6 p.m.
Brasstown
Community Center
255 Settawig Road
Brasstown, NC
See page 5A

Enotah Garden Club Plant Sale



April 18 • 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.
City Hall in Young Harris
See page 5A

Chatuge Regional Hospital & Nursing Home Jewelry Sale



April 23 • 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Hospital Dining Room
See page 5A

Erosion & Sedimentation Control Course

April 29 • 8 a.m.
Towns Co. Senior Building
Hiawassee, GA
See page 2A



Towns Co. Baseball

Tues., April 16 • 5:55 p.m.
@ Commerce
Thurs., April 18 • 5 p.m.
vs. Pinecrest
Fri., April 19 • 4:30 p.m.
@ Hebron

Towns Co. Soccer

Tues., April 16 • 5 p.m.
@ Hebron
Wed., April 17 • 4 p.m.
vs. George Walton
Thurs., April 18 • 5:30 p.m.
vs. Providence

Rhododendron Fest begins on Friday

By Libby Shook
Towns County Herald
libby.tcherald@windstream.net

Nothing says 'spring is here' quite like the blooming of the rhododendrons at Hamilton Gardens.

Curator Paul Hansen and Garden Shop Manager Catherine Hansen are hyped up and ready to go as the Hamilton Gardens host their Annual Rhododendron Festival beginning Friday, April 19th.

The event continues, weekends only, through Sunday, May 12th (Mother's Day weekend).

You will not want to miss any of the exciting scheduled events including the 30 very talented local artists and crafters who will be showing and selling their artwork in the new Crafter's Village adjacent to the Hamilton Gardens' main entrance.

"In addition to the artists, there will be plenty of good eats, hot coffee, and cold ice tea served in the Paris Pavilion," boasted Catherine Hansen.

Another exciting attrac-



Hamilton Gardens will be busy for the next three weekends as the Rhododendron Festival gears up. Photo/Libby Shook

tion will be a free Wine Tasting scheduled for Saturday, April 20th, from noon to 5 p.m., compliments of Crane Creek Vineyards.

Catherine encourages you "to bring an appetite and a thirst for a sip of our local vineyard's best."

The 'Special Speakers Series' promises to be a favorite part of each weekend and you will have the opportunity to enjoy the wealth of knowledge

See Hamilton Gardens, page 11A

There's a new ambulance in Towns County

By Libby Shook
Towns County Herald
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Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall is pleased to announce the purchase of a new 2013 Med 1 Ambulance to enhance services provided by the Towns County EMS.

"This is another SPLOST project with the cost being \$142,792," said Kendall. "The EMS does an excellent job and the citizens of Towns County deserve the best equipment we can provide."

This 'advanced life-support truck' is a state-of-the-art vehicle that comes fully-loaded with all the latest features including LED lighting, reflective safety doors, a stair chair, a back up camera, and many additional safety features.

Towns County EMT/



Towns County emergency workers and Commissioner Kendall are excited about the county's new med unit. Photo/Libby Shook

Firefighter James Coward said, "When you're backing up, you don't have anybody to spot you. That back up camera is the greatest thing in the world. It's a great safety feature."

Towns County EMS Di-

rector Rickey Mathis said, "This is a great investment. This box is made to last. We put on about 25,000 miles per year per ambulance. We will go through two or three

See Ambulance, page 11A

Chris Young rocks The Hall

By Libby Shook
Towns County Herald
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If you weren't at the Anderson Music Hall on Friday night, April 12th, to witness the incredible performance of Country music singer/songwriter Chris Young, you were definitely in the wrong place at the right time.

From the moment he walked out on stage, the fans were on their feet and that's where they remained for the rest of the evening.

Young put on an electrifying performance with a tremendous stage set up complete with state-of-the-art lighting and incredible instrumentals by his band.

It's rare to see someone make such a genuine and immediate connection with the audience, but Young pulled it off.

It wasn't just Young, however, but the whole package. It was obvious that he and



Chris Young sings his hit Save Water, Drink Beer and gets the crowd involved at Anderson Music Hall. Photo/Libby Shook

his band have a great working relationship and it was just a whole lot of fun to watch them on stage together.

It was a spontaneous and playful mixture of extraordinary talent, intense energy, and a profound passion for what they do.

Young opened with Save

Water, Drink Beer and the fans loved it.

To the delight of his fans, he continued with one hit after the next including *The Dashboard*, *Getting You Home*, *Neon*, *Voices*, and an all time favorite of the fans, *The Man I Want To Be*.

See Young, page 11A

Controlled burns responsible for smoke

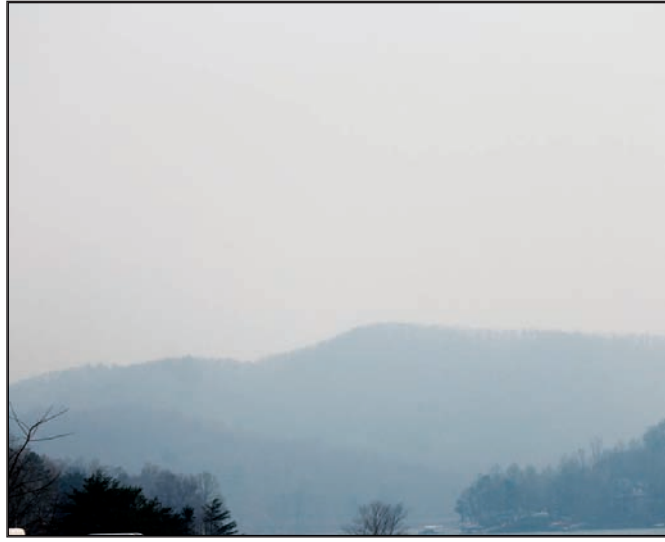
By Libby Shook
Towns County Herald
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Smokey the Bear would definitely have been "prowlin' and a growlin' and a sniffin' the air" on Wednesday, April 10th, as a thick cloud of smoke covered the air from Young Harris Mountain eastward into Hiawassee and surrounding counties.

He would not, however, have found the source of the fire unless he ventured up to the top of Unicoi Mountain as the U.S. Forestry Service had planned a "prescribed burn" (controlled burn) on Low Gap (controlled burn) on the side of the mountain.

Mother Nature acted on her own accord as the winds shifted to the Southeast and brought the smoke rolling into Towns County.

This caused quite a stir among county residents who were quick to respond to what they considered a potential threat to the area. Assistant Towns County Fire Chief Harold Copeland report-



The Towns County horizon has been plagued recently by a thick cloud of smoke. Controlled burns are the culprit. Photo/Libby Shook

ed that Towns County 911 and the Towns County Fire Rescue Department were bombarded with calls from concerned citizens regarding the smoke. "They even ran me down on the street to ask me what was going on," said Copeland. Dave Martin, Chatooga River District Fire Manager for the U.S. Forest Service, said, "Smoke manage-

See Burn, page 11A

Towns deputies charge two in unrelated thefts

By Charles Duncan
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Towns County sheriff's deputies have made two arrests in unrelated incidents involving thefts and a burglary, Towns County Sheriff's reports show.

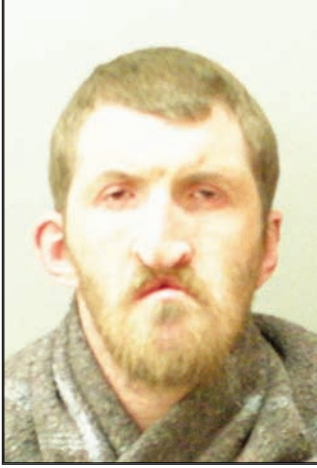
First, deputies arrested John Eugene Thornley, 31, of Young Harris April 9th in connection with the theft of a Stihl chainsaw from a residence on Sampson Road in Young Harris, sheriff's reports show.

On April 4th, deputies responded to a residence on Sampson Road in Young Harris, in reference to a theft of a Stihl chainsaw.

Four days later, investigators recovered the stolen chainsaw, sheriff's reports show.

The stolen chainsaw was valued at \$1,136, sheriff's reports show.

Towns County authorities say Thornley is a person of interest in other incidents that are currently under investigation by the Towns County Sheriff's



John Thornley



Terry Williams
Office.

Thornley was released from state prison

See Arrests, page 11A

The First 100 have been an experience

First term coroner Eller is blazing a trail

By Libby Shook
Towns County Herald
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Wednesday, April 10th, marked Towns County Coroner Tashina Eller's 100th day in office.

Eller reports that she has had nine calls to date as well as closing pending cases carried over from last year.

"It's been a whirlwind since I took office. It's been very busy with the first month being the busiest," said Eller. "Being coroner is a very humbling experience and honestly, it makes me appreciate just how precious life truly is."

Eller takes her role as county coroner very seriously and believes that it is important to balance professionalism with compassion when dealing with the families of the victims.

She also believes that each body she examines has a story to tell and she feels that it is the role of the coroner "to bring that story to light."

Eller said that when she arrives on the scene of a death, she immediately goes to the family first, introduces herself, expresses her condolences for their loss, and lets them know what will take place as she examines the body.

"I recognize, that while I have to be professional in my role as coroner, it is also important to be sensitive to the



Tashina Eller

fact that this family has just lost a loved one," she said. "I try to talk with them first and keep it from being so cold and impersonal."

"I want everyone, whether it's my first case or my 5,000th case, to feel that they matter and to let them know that I am here to provide answers and help them with closure," she said.

Eller has had some people question whether she is "thick-skinned" enough to be able to handle the challenges of this job.

"I think you need to keep yourself tender to what you encounter as coroner," she said. "When you lose that, it's time

See Eller, page 11A

Fire & Rescue saves four in sailboat

Special to Towns County Herald
tcherald@windstream.net

On Monday March 25th, four intrepid sailors decided to brave the frigid and snowy conditions on Lake Chatuge.

Their 18-foot sailboat was heeled over from the start of their voyage across the lake, according to Towns County Fire and Rescue Capt. David Sellers.

With wind gusts topping 45 mph, it didn't take long before the knockdown of the boat occurred, according to Capt. Sellers.

In sailing terms, a knockdown is where the sailboat is hit by a strong wind on its broadside and the boat is blown over, according to Capt. Sellers.

With waves mounting, the boat took on water rapidly, and all aboard fell into the icy waters, according to Capt. Sellers.

The younger two of the crew swam to the nearest shore for help while the

two older sailors proceeded to try and pull the boat toward land, according to Capt. Sellers.

A call was received at the Towns County 911 center, at 6:23 pm and the tones were dropped for the Towns County Water Rescue Team to mobilize, according to Capt. Sellers.

By 6:29 p.m., the first rescuer arrived on the scene., according to Capt. Sellers.

From the Ridges Dock, the emergency rescue boat was launched at 6:35 p.m. with rescue personnel on board, according to Capt. Sellers.

All survivors were on shore by 6:47 p.m., according to Capt. Sellers.

See Knockdown, page 11A

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