

Move Over...from Page 1A

safely to their families after working around the clock to keep our lights on, even in extreme weather conditions."

BRMEMC linemen Brad Wilson, Leslie Groves, Fred Gray, Travis Lunsford, Colton Payne and Eddy Partin were on hand for the official signing of the legislation into law by Gov. Deal.

House Bill 767 requires motorists approaching utility linemen at an active work site, as indicated by traffic cones or flashing lights, to change lanes or reduce their speed to a reasonable and proper speed below the posted speed limit.

White is the light color that denotes utility workers in

the process of their duties. Any motorist who does not change lanes or drop their speed to avoid the utility workers can be fined up to \$250 per incident.

The new bill, effective July 1, applies to all types of utility workers, including electric, natural gas, cable and telecommunications workers, right-of-way crews or utility contractors.

The law asks motorists to make a lane change into a lane not adjacent to the towing, recovery, or highway maintenance, or utility service vehicle if possible in the existing safety and traffic conditions; or if a lane change under paragraph would be impossible, prohibit-

ed by law, or unsafe, reduce the speed of the motor vehicle to a reasonable and proper speed for the existing road and traffic conditions and be prepared to stop.

"Hopefully this legislation brings awareness to motorists that depending on the emergency situation, they will give the situation the room it needs," Sen. Gooch said. "That was the reason for the bill. Our utility crews work a lot of crazy hours - at night, during storms, during all sorts of extreme weather. We want to do everything we can to try to protect them."

Skynyrd...from Page 1A

complaining, that's a great problem to have.

"I'm thankful that they're all wanting to come to Towns County and the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds and spend their money here in the county."

First-time Georgia Mountain Fairgoers Lynyrd Skynyrd will be the biggest act ever to grace Anderson Music Hall, and with customers already having called in from as far away as Colorado and Michigan, Thomason knows this concert will be something special.

"I think it's wonderful that we're able to get Lynyrd Skynyrd," said Thomason. "With the building only seating 2,900, something we've never been able to do is get the bigger acts, so yes, I'm thankful that we can do this, and hopefully we'll get some

more."

Other good news from the fairgrounds includes recent confirmation of the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, which will be playing Anderson Music Hall on Oct. 1. Nitty Gritty Dirt Band will celebrate 50 years together this year, having formed in 1966, so Thomason is certainly looking forward to that show.

Other big talent coming up will be the Travis Tritt concert on May 14, which is the same weekend as the Georgia Mountain EggFest.

"And also we've got the Lake Lanier Cornhole Tournament that same weekend - we've got 24 teams registered for the cornhole tournament," said Thomason. "We've sold about 1,400 tickets so far on Travis Tritt, and we figure we'll have probably 1,800 or 1,900 by the time it rolls

around."

Plus, Chubby Checker will be playing alongside The Tams and The Drifters on May 28, which is Memorial Day Weekend.

Coming up in July is the huge annual event known as the Georgia Mountain Fair, running July 15 through July 23.

"We're looking for volunteers for the Georgia Mountain Fair and the Fall Festival, so if anybody wants to volunteer, please contact the Georgia Mountain Fair," said Thomason. "We've got booths that we need help with, and all kinds of jobs."

"And be sure to come visit the Hamilton Rhododendron Garden. It's absolutely beautiful - it's blooming, and it's really getting pretty."

Prayer...from Page 1A

mental Congress in 1775 called Americans to pray for wisdom in the forming of a new nation, critical times and decisions had led Americans to seek God's will.

The placing of a cross at Chesapeake Bay in 1607 asserted the faith of our early

countrymen as they stood on the foundation of Jesus Christ.

At that crucial time Rev. Robert Hunt led a worship service for the Jamestown Colony.

Christian belief holds that even as Nehemiah rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem to show

the power of God, prayer today builds spiritual walls of protection around and within our country, a country built on a solid rock of faith.

On this day and every day, we pray, "Dear God, hear our hearts as we cry out for our nation."

Hamilton...from Page 1A

Cunningham, Joan Crothers and Doug Canup.

The gardens have undergone a flurry of activity to make them presentable for the current blooming season.

"Volunteers are doing all the work up here both from the homeowners association, the Master Gardner group here in Union and Towns County, and the local garden clubs are participating," said Howard.

"It's been an amazing thing to open this up to the community because we have volunteers and people coming and saying, 'I want to help, I want to give money, what can I do?' So it's been rewarding to see the kind of response that we've had," she said.

The gardens are currently working with the Young Harris College Art Department to design a new logo.

"We are hopeful that we'll have it this year before these senior students gradu-



Grace Howard

ate, but it is a work in progress right now," said Howard.

The board's first priority is to finish upkeep on the garden infrastructure.

"Our first priority was to get the gardens in shape, to get the trails mulched, the deadwood out that's been down there for a long time, and get it presentable so that when people come through they can see what's happening

in the garden," said Howard.

Much of the required work has already been completed, thanks to efforts by various organizations and individuals.

"We needed to get excess foliage out of these front beds, we needed to replace the walls around the beds, we needed to replace the bridge down in the garden. Those are some of the things that were very noticeable and needed to be done. That's been done," said Howard.

She added that she didn't see any limit to work that can be done in order to bring the property up to standard.

"So right now we're just queuing up to look pretty. The house is open; we need to look good for it. So we're just trying to get our party clothes on for bloom season and move forward with the donations that are coming in nicely," she said.

Towns County Clean Sweep Week

By Mason Mitcham
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Grace Howard is a woman of many hats - for example, when she isn't tending the Hamilton Rhododendron Gardens, she's organizing the yearly Towns County Clean Sweep Week in honor of Earth Day.

In previous years, the Towns County Clean Sweep Week might have been described as a one-woman-show, but this year, things have changed. With the popularity of Clean Sweep Week growing, a committee was formed to organize the event.

The Veterans of Foreign Wars, the American Legion, and the Mountain Movers and Shakers of Towns County have all taken an interest.

"The veterans picked up all of Highway 288 this last weekend, which is the nastiest place in town," said Howard. "Having those kinds of organizations involved and interested is a real plus for us."

The committee actually had difficulty finding county roads for county detainees to clean, according to Howard, because people are doing a better job picking up litter.

"I had the detainees two days this week from the Commissioner's Office, and we were scrambling to find roads for them to go to. Even some of the ones that traditionally looked bad did not look bad this year. So I think it's catching on and I think that's exciting," said Howard.



Karl Scharnberg and Jim Hancock are participating in Towns County Clean Sweep Week by picking up trash along Highway 76.

"The Towns County Homeowners Association is picking up here on Highway 76, from the bridge to Sunnyside," said Howard. "288 was picked up. There's a citizen's group back off of Longview, in that area, they're picking up there, and we have a church team from McConnell Church that picked up Bugscuffle and Shake Rag."

"We had seven teams from Sharp Memorial in Young Harris picking up a number of places around there in the Young Harris community. The Enotah Garden Club picked up from Brother's (at Willow Ranch) all the way to the traffic light in Young Harris," she added.

Howard tentatively expects more bags of trash to be picked up than last year.

"I think there were about maybe 80 that came

off of Sunnyside, but I'm not sure. Last year we had 168, so I'm hoping we'll have more this year," she said.

Going forward, she expects the tradition to continue to gain momentum in the upcoming years.

"After three years I think this is in a pretty good place," she said. "I'd like to see it on a more regular basis, perhaps twice a year, if we could manage that, if people could say 'This is my spot, I'll keep it clean.'"

For example, she thought that the once-a-year lake cleanup could easily be upgraded to twice a year.

"I'm an environmental activist, and so I see it as something I like to do and I like to be involved in, and it's a part of taking care of the place I live," she said.

County...from Page 1A

market value of your homes and things, Towns County values dropped \$628 million during that period.

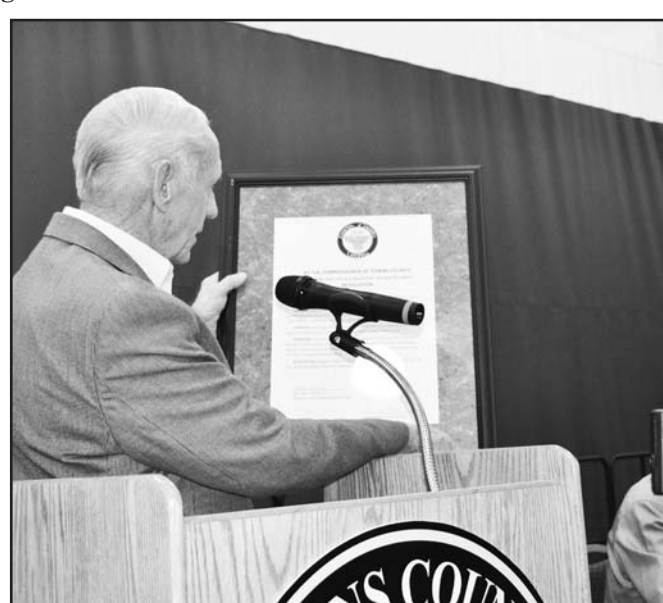
"The banks started foreclosing on homes and things. That forced the tax assessors to lower your property values down, so the maximum value of Towns County, even if you have the same number of homes, had dropped \$628 million. That put pressure on the county budgets," he said.

After Commissioner Kendall spoke about fiscal issues, he turned to issues regarding laws that protect the surrounding environment, including the mountains and lake.

In a straw vote held in 2006, the people of Towns County overwhelmingly voted in support of preserving the environment, passing ordinances restricting building heights, adopting mountain protection standards, and restricting the sale of U.S. Forest Service property, among other ordinances.

"When I came into office we started holding some county meetings and talking to some people about some ordinances that we need to pass to protect our mountains and lake, and this is the result. Look how one-sided it was," Commissioner Kendall said, referring to the fact that each vote passed by triple digits.

"Towns County is top, in the Northeast Georgia Mountains and also in the state, in tourism. Our mountains, lake and promoting tourism is im-



Commissioner Kendall reads proclamation honoring Jim Hicks and David Mullins for their efforts to develop the Towns County Food Pantry. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

portant. That's why we need to do everything we could have," he said.

Deputy Clerk Andrea Anderson read an e-mail from Callie Moore, the executive director of the Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition, affirming various efforts the county has made to preserve Lake Chatuge.

"Commissioner Kendall has supported and funded a lengthy list of projects and initiatives to improve the quality of the lake, not the least of which is to provide \$150,000 in SPLOST funds for nutrient reduction technology at the Hiwassee wastewater treatment plant," the email read.

"The lake is perfectly

safe for swimming at every location we've ever tested. There are very happy bass fishermen following the many tournaments hosted on the lake and we have not seen any large-scale algae blooms," it continued.

The e-mail concluded by assuring others that the county is making a positive difference for lake water quality.

At the end of the address, Kendall urged whoever is elected as next commissioner to continue to uphold the financial values and dedication to environmental protection that the county has exhibited over the past years.

Chastain...from Page 1A

ago, a 10-year-old boy currently enrolled in Towns County Elementary, and is himself a graduate of Towns County Schools, Class of 1984.

As to why he decided to take on the responsibility of school board member, Chastain said it's all about maintaining the good things that have come to Towns County Schools of late.

"They've got several good programs started, and I'd just like to keep them rolling and improve on them if we can, and try to make it good for all the students, to get them prepared for real life, college and jobs," said Chastain.

One area of the schools Chastain has been impressed with is the expanding role of dual-enrollment opportunities for students, including the upcoming telecommuting classroom partnership with Young

Harris College, which will be available to high school upperclassmen in the fall.

And while Chastain may have been appointed already, he will not be considered a full voting member of the board until his paperwork is accepted by the state, which Chastain expects will happen by the May meeting.

As an interim member, Chastain's tenure on the board will last through December of this year, though he will be eligible to run for a special election in November to fill that seat for the remaining two years of Bradshaw's term.

"I'm just trying to fill some good shoes that left, and I hope I do a good job for everybody," said Chastain. "If anyone has any questions, feel free to ask me."

The special qualifying

dates will be announced soon, during which time other Hiwassee residents interested in running for the seat can qualify for the November special election.

Towns County Schools Superintendent Dr. Darren Berrong is glad to have Chastain on board, and said that he was fully behind the board's decision to make the appointment.

"I honestly think he has the vision that our board has and that I have, and that is academics," said Dr. Berrong. "I think his focus is producing the best student that we can produce, and the focus isn't necessarily on an athletic field, but more in the classroom. So I think he fits what our vision is for the school, so I'm actually anxious to have him on board."

Garden Club now 75 years old



On Thursday April 21, the Enotah Garden Club hosted its yearly plant sale at Mayor's Park in Young Harris. The club is now 75 years old. Photo/Mason Mitcham

By Mason Mitcham
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Plants are always in style, but especially when the 75-year-old Enotah Garden Club is involved.

On Thursday, April 21, the Enotah Garden Club had its annual plant sale at Mayor's Park in front of Young Harris City Hall.

The plant sale is a long-standing tradition.

"It first started when members would auction off plants from their own yards, and that's how our plant sale originally started," said Club President Tish Lashley. "Now we have different vendors that bring plants and all, and all the money that we raise is given to local organizations to help make our area more beautiful."

Several vendors were in Mayor's Park, selling items related to gardening.

"We've asked local vendors to come and join our group. So we've got Hellen Sturgeon, a local artist, and we're raffling off an original rhododendron painting of hers. She just donated that, and that's been a fundraiser for us this year," said Lashley.

Other vendors were selling birdhouses or various plants from nurseries around the state.

"We're selling herbs,

vegetables, flowers, shrubs, hanging baskets. We've got azaleas, we've sold lilac bushes, ninebark, which is a native. Then we have tomato plants," said Lashley.

"We have not grown any of it. It comes from different establishments, and then we sell. Then we get a certain profit that we make from that," she added.

For Lashley, it's an exciting year to be president. The Enotah Garden Club just celebrated its 75th anniversary in March. It's the second oldest garden club in the state, superseded only by the Savannah Garden Club.

"I've enjoyed working with all these hard-working women. We're really excited about working up at Hamilton Gardens. I love just getting my hands in the dirt and also being able to help beautify the gardens up here that started in 1961, and to be able to continue keeping them up," Lashley said.

Elaine Delcuze, a former garden club president, said that the history of the club dated back to the 1940s.

"They had members such as Zell Miller's mother. She was one of the original members. Her daughter Jane and Zell would come to the garden club meetings. One of the original pictures had them with the little flower pots and

little flower arrangements," recalled Delcuze.

She insisted that the Enotah Garden Club has a greater purpose than simple flower arranging.

"Even though flower arrangements is such a focus in garden clubs, it's growing them that our club focuses on. Most of our meetings deal with nature and the environment," she said.

Lashley added that going into its 76th year, the club is taking an active role in civic improvements.

"That's what our club usually does. We don't do any flower arranging. We give to the (Hiwassee River) Watershed Coalition. And like I said, a big project we're going to be taking on is Hamilton Gardens," she said.

Past projects of the Enotah Garden Club include getting Young Harris recognition as a Tree City, donating to the botanical gardens, and giving to Young Harris College's Beetle Foundation and Chestnut Foundation.

Future projects in Young Harris are underway.

"At Cupid Falls for the City of Young Harris, grant money was given and so they put in the new walkway, and so we'll start doing some planning over there at Cupid Falls," said Lashley. "Spring is our busiest time."