

# Towns County Herald

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Wednesday, May 13, 2015

## Local Weather and Lake Levels

Thurs: Clouds	80 59
Fri: Rain	75 62
Sat: Rain	77 63
Sun: Rain	82 62
Mon: Rain	84 64
Tue: Rain	84 63
Wed: Rain	83 62



Upstream Elevation Predicted 05/13/2015	
Lake Chatuge	1,925.95
Lake Nottely	1,774.44
Blue Ridge	1,685.61

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## SPORTS

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The Towns County Tax Assessors Office will be CLOSED May 19-21 for training and will re-open on Friday, May 22nd at 8:30 a.m.

TOWNS COUNTY Farmers Market

Towns County Farmers Market opens Saturday, May 16th from 9 - Noon

See Page 14



\$10,000 Rotary Reverse Raffle!

See Page 2



BIG GREEN EGG FEST May 16th

Chatuge Regional Health Fair Saturday, May 16th

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## Carville: 'must accept failure before you can succeed in life'

By Mason Mitcham  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

The seniors of Young Harris College, class of 2015, graduated on Saturday, May 9. Traffic through Main Street of Young Harris was crowded as families and friends poured in to support their graduating students.

For the occasion, the college brought in as a keynote speaker political analyst James Carville. Carville is longtime friends with his mentor, YHC alumnus Governor Zell Miller. He worked on Miller's gubernatorial campaign in 1990, as well as crafting strategies for Bill Clinton's presidential election in 1992.

Following Hurricane Katrina, Carville and his wife, Mary Matalin, became champions of the effort to revitalize



**James Carville** and rebuild New Orleans and the Gulf Coast. He has appeared on FOX News and CNN both as host and contributor. Before that, he served in the United States Marine Corps and received his degree and Juris Doctorate from Louisiana State University. Carville currently teaches political science

at Tulane University. "This is really a wonderful place," Carville told the graduating class, speaking of Young Harris and the Blue Ridge region in general. "You come here, and to an outsider, it's almost like, hold on, is this real? It's a cocoon in the middle of these mountains, and you have this real nurturing, loving atmosphere."

From jokes and comments on the beauty of the mountains at the beginning, Carville's message took a sharper turn.

"The deal is, you come here, and then you leave, and when you leave, you get to take all of your body, but 75 percent of your heart," he said. "The other 25 percent will stay in these mountains. When you

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## Speir inspires during Day of Prayer

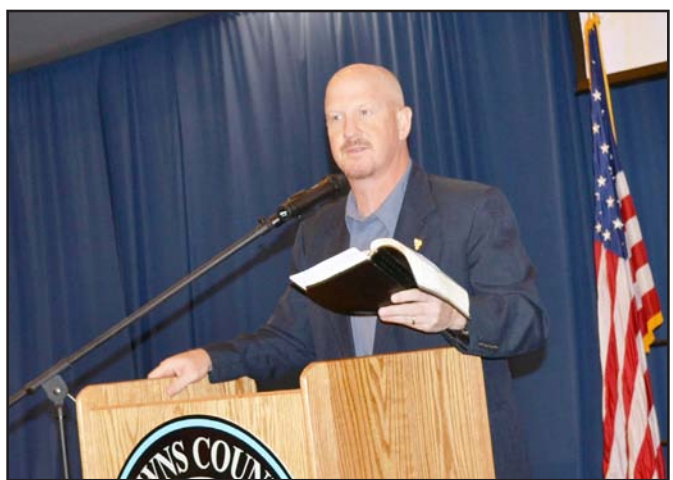
By Mason Mitcham  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

Mark Speir, head coach football coach at Western Carolina University knows about the power of prayer.

He learned that lesson in 2007 while serving as the defensive line coach for Appalachian State University in Boone, NC.

He shared an inspirational story with residents from Towns and Union counties, and Clay County, NC, during Towns County's National Day of Prayer Breakfast at the Towns County Recreation and Conference Center.

A self-proclaimed believer in miracles, Speir recalled that his then 6-year-old son Jackson prayed for a month before a match up between Ap-



Keynote Speaker Mark Speir, head football coach of the Catamounts from Western Carolina University, holds his personal playbook, the Holy Bible. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

palachian State, a team Speir previously coached, and the Michigan Wolverines.

"My 6-year-old-son

prayed that Daddy's football team would beat Michigan. For one solid month, he prayed. I

See Prayer, Page 10

## Morgan signs with Montreat

By Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

Towns County High School senior Tori Morgan signed a letter of intent to play softball with Montreat College of North Carolina on Tuesday, May 5.

On hand to view this historic moment in Morgan's life were her family, several members of her high school softball team, friends, coaches, some teachers and administrators.

"I've been at it since I was 4 years old," said Morgan. "I've always dreamed of playing on a college softball field."

When Morgan visited Montreat, she noticed two things – the softball field was gorgeous and there was a feel-



Towns County senior Tori Morgan, center, signs to play softball for Montreat College in Montreat, NC. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

ing of camaraderie about the campus.

"The adrenaline of getting out there and playing with a bunch of girls that turn into a family – it's just one big fam-

ily, that's what gets me about softball," said Morgan.

Needless to say, Morgan is excited for the opportunity

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## Hamilton relatives visit Gardens

By Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

Since mid-April, residents of Towns County and beyond have been able to catch the Jewel of the North Georgia Mountains in full bloom, as the Hamilton Gardens celebrates its annual Rhododendron Festival.

Today, the gardens hold more than 3,000 plants, running the gamut from dogwoods and magnolias to native azaleas and rhododendrons – there's something for every plant lover.

Hamilton Gardens began in 1982, when Fred and Hazel Hamilton donated more than 1,000 plants from their property in Towns County.

"Fred was no longer able to take care of them, and he wanted to give them to us so that people could enjoy the beauty for many, many years to come," said Hilda Thomason, manager of the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds. "We got a grant through the government to move the plants, and we moved them over here."

Carol Thompson of Virginia is Fred and Hazel's granddaughter, and she visited the gardens recently to see what had become of her grandfather's legacy.

"It was his passion, because he had worked for Sears for many years and ended his career as the territorial controller for the entire Southeast for Sears, back when Sears was really a big presence," said Thompson. "He worked so hard and traveled so much that when he came home, the rhododendrons and the azaleas



Carol Thompson gazes at the fruits of her grandfather's labors. Thompson is Fred Hamilton's granddaughter. Photo/ Lowell Nicholson

gave him his peace. He could just put Sears out of his mind, probably, while he worked and enjoyed doing God's work, I would say."

There are more than 400 types of plants available in the Hamilton Gardens, including varieties of rhododendron made by Hamilton through grafting – one named for Fred's wife, Hazel Hamilton.

"That's one of the things Fred loved to do, to see what he could create," said Thompson. "Not just get something else to grow, but to take plants and actually make a new plant. He loved that."

Thompson thinks of the gardens, which were installed and run on specific instructions from her grandfather, as a huge legacy.

"To me, it's awe-inspiring to think that one man started all of this," said Thompson. "That because of his interest

and because of his generosity, that he donated them, and he made sure that they were donated someplace where they would grow."

Russ Hamilton, son of Fred and Hazel Hamilton, and Carol's uncle, grew up tending his father's gardens.

"We lived in Atlanta, and then we bought a house up here in 1968 on the lake," said Hamilton. "He got into rhododendrons and native azaleas while we were in Atlanta, and he brought a lot of them up here and continued his hobby up here, from seeds and cuttings."

Thirty years on from the opening of the Hamilton Gardens, Fred and Hazel's contribution to Towns County has never been more apparent.

"I think he'd love it," said Hamilton. "It's beautiful."

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## Malone, Rich speak to Shakers

By Mason Mitcham  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

**Young Harris** - At the Movers and Shakers meeting on Friday, May 8, Charles Rich and Patrick Malone spoke about campaigning for the Union County seat on the EMC board of directors.

"Me and Pat are both Republicans. We're both conservatives. We want what's right for the county, we want what's right for the EMC, we want what's right for the membership of the EMC," said Rich.

Rich has worked in the automotive end of the insurance business for over 20 years. He started as a simple appraiser but quickly grew into the title of Total Loss Administrator, managing over 50 shops in three states.

He went to Brown High

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Charles Rich



Patrick Malone

## Dr. Hobbs to lead TCHS

By Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

Towns County Elementary School Assistant Principal Dr. Connie Hobbs will be the principal for the high school to start the 2015-2016 school year, thanks to unanimous approval by the board of education.

The Hobbs family moved to Towns County from South Georgia nine years ago when Von Hobbs, Dr. Hobbs' husband, took an opportunity with Georgia Farm Bureau Insurance after having vacationed in the area.

Dr. Hobbs began at the middle school, where she taught sixth-grade math for seven years, before moving up to eighth grade to teach Georgia history for a year, and then over to the elementary school to be assistant principal this year.

This school year is Dr. Hobbs' first as an administrator, but she has been an educator for 23 years, and she has enjoyed the transition over to the principal side of things.

"I love it," said Dr. Hobbs. "I feel like I have more of an influence. Instead of just influencing maybe my grade level, which might be anywhere from 60 to 90 kids, I feel like I have an influence over a couple of hundred children as a result."

"I feel like my background from being a classroom teacher for so long gives me insight into what it's like in the classroom, what do those teachers need, what do they want from an administrator. They want me to be here for whenever they need me for



Dr. Connie Hobbs

whatever support, whatever I can do for them."

Dr. Hobbs' two sons are graduates of TCHS, and were heavily involved in sports and academics. She also has a daughter who will be starting next year as a sophomore at the high school.

"I have heard from my daughter some kids who are very, very excited, 'Oh, Dr. Hobbs is going to be our principal.' And then, there are those that are like, 'What? Dr. Hobbs is going to be our principal? Oh, no.' There have been mixed emotions," said Dr. Hobbs, joking.

When it comes to education, Dr. Hobbs has spent a great deal of time in the classroom, both teaching and learning. She has a bachelor's degree, master's degree, specialist degree, leadership add-on, and a doctorate in curriculum and teaching.

Even so, she knew that most of the people applying for the principal position would be people from out of town, and she wanted to give the board of education and superintendent a local option that was already

See Hobbs, Page 10

## Chastain to lead TCMS

By Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

Erica Chastain has been named the new principal of Towns County Middle School.

"I feel honored and am delighted to be chosen for this position, and I hope to be a contributing factor and just be part of the success of the school," said Chastain.

The Towns County Board of Education made the decision in the May 4 pre-board work session, and Chastain will replace the current principal of the middle school, David Turner.

Chastain will take the helm starting July 1, which is the official start of the 2015-2016 school year. Currently, she is the assistant principal and guidance counselor of the high school, and she looks forward to stepping into the greater leadership position.

"I hope just to be a positive contribution to the middle school, and I'm going to work hard to support the staff that's in place and the students," said Chastain. "I do not foresee making any major changes. My goal for the future in that position would just be to continue to build upon the existing successes of the school."

After Turner announced that he would be resigning from his principal post to take up a position in his hometown of Villa Rica, Chastain expressed her interest in the position.

"I actually worked in the middle school about four years ago as the middle school counselor and assistant princi-



Erica Chastain

pal, and was very interested in the opportunity if it ever came available," said Chastain.

Chastain is a Towns County native and school system alumna. She lives in Hiawassee and has two children in the elementary school.

The takeaway? She's here to stay.

"I have a vested interest in education in general," said Chastain. "I love education, and I think I have a vested interest because I have children that will be coming through the school."

Having been with Towns County Schools for 14 years, Chastain is no stranger to upward mobility within the school system.

"When I first got hired as a teacher, I taught elementary

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