

Towns County Herald

Legal Organ of Towns County

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Local Weather and Lake Levels

| | |
|--------------|-------|
| Thu: Sunny | 80 54 |
| Fri: Clouds | 82 55 |
| Sat: Clouds | 80 56 |
| Sun: Clouds | 80 60 |
| Mon: Showers | 77 61 |
| Tue: Showers | 77 59 |
| Wed: Clouds | 79 62 |



Upstream Elevation Predicted 09/24/2014

| | |
|--------------|----------|
| Lake Chatuge | 1,919.75 |
| Lake Nottely | 1,767.11 |
| Blue Ridge | 1,677.29 |

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Varsity Baseball Fund Raiser Sept. 27th @ Ingles

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Youth Basketball Registration Oct 6th-25th @ New Rec Center

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Food Distribution Towns County Food Pantry 2-5 PM

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Softball

Tues. 9/23 vs. Athens Christian 4:45 PM

Thurs 9/25 @ Commerce 4:45 PM

Football

Fri 9/26 @ George Walton Academy 7:30 PM

Lowell Nicholson Field Dedication happening on Sept. 30

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Hiawassee - Towns County Schools will honor its No. 1 Fan, Lowell Nicholson, with a special ceremony before the last high school softball home game of the year on Tuesday, Sept. 30, against Providence at 4:45 p.m.

The ceremony will culminate in an official dedication of the field as *Lowell Nicholson Field*, commemorating his many years of service to the young people of Towns County sports.

Nicholson has spent almost 40 years covering youth sports for newspapers, and he is the long-time photographer for the *Towns County Herald* and *North Georgia News*.

He remains humble about the dedication.

"I appreciate the school and what they're going to do for me," said Nicholson. "I really don't deserve that - it's not about me, it's about the girls that play softball."

People started calling the field *Lowell Nicholson Field* more than a decade ago,



Tuesday, Sept. 30 is a special day for our very own Lowell Nicholson. Towns County Schools will officially dedicate the girls' softball field as *Lowell Nicholson Field*. Photo/Tava Bradshaw

when Nicholson was asked to throw out the very first pitch ever thrown there for a softball game.

Lady Indians' High School Basketball Head Coach Jim Melton remembers well that pitch, and knows what sports and the athletes of Towns County mean to Nicholson.

"He's our No. 1 fan," said Melton.

"Any time you think about Towns County Athletics, Lowell Nicholson comes to mind," added Towns County High School Principal and Athletic Director Jonathan Gibson. "If the kids are involved, Lowell will be there, and our kids love to see him."

Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris has even offered to make Nicholson an honorary Union County resident.

"Lowell Nicholson is something else," Paris said. "He's dedicated to the communities in Union and Towns counties. He's dedicated to the *Towns County Herald* and *North Georgia News*."

The ceremony will fea-

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Sheriff Clinton talks public safety

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Towns County Sheriff Chris Clinton spoke last week to the Plantation Villas Homeowners Association of Hiawassee at a lunch meeting conducted at the Chophouse of Hiawassee, centering on community safety.

"I'm very honored to be able to be here today to speak with you," said Sheriff Clinton. "And I kind of wanted to give you some things that would help keep you safe."

"We're offering safety classes to the citizens," said Sheriff Clinton. "Those are completely free. We're also offering the Citizen's Law Enforcement Academy."

The C.L.E.A. graduated its inaugural class back in August, and the sheriff expounded on some of its virtues, relating the history of the office of the sheriff.

"It's the only office of



Sheriff Chris Clinton

any kind that specifically has the duty to preserve the peace, protect the lives, persons, property, health and morals of the people," said Sheriff Clinton. "A lot of law enforcement agencies out there, a lot of different organizations have been given some authority, but they don't have the duty. The sheriff actually has the duty to keep everybody safe."

And each month, the sheriff gets detailed reports on

each individual deputy, and analyzing the data yields some pretty outstanding numbers.

"So far this year we've had, per month, about 2,653 calls of service average, which actually breaks down to about every 16 and a half minutes we're getting a call of service," said Sheriff Clinton. "A lot of times people don't realize how much is going on."

The Sheriff's Office is projecting nearly 32,000 calls by the end of the year, but that number can fluctuate.

"That's based on the hope that these next few fall months and winter months slow down a little bit, like this first month back to school has slowed down," said Sheriff Clinton. "If not, it'll be somewhere around 36,000 to 38,000, but roughly 32,000 is probably what we're looking at."

A deeper look at that call volume offers an insight into what crimes are being reported

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Towns' EOCT scores impressive

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Scores are in for last year's End of Course Tests, and Towns County High School students, teachers, parents and the community as a whole should be extremely proud of the results.

"I want for our community to be thankful and appreciative for the school system they have," said Towns County High School Principal Jonathan Gibson. "We are fortunate in Towns County to have the best students, and these kids have the best teachers in the state of Georgia."

Overall, Towns County High School students ranked first or second in five of the eight End of Course Tests for the 2013-2014 school year versus the rest of the RESA, and improved pass rates in six of the eight tests. They also scored well above state averages in nearly all categories.

In ninth grade literature, the state passing average was 88. Towns County students blew that average away with a 97.98, coming in first in



Jonathan Gibson

the Pioneer RESA with five points higher than the second highest average from Rabun County. This average also reflects a 12.58-point increase over Towns County's 2012-2013 school year average on the same EOCT.

American literature, the EOCT taken by juniors, saw Towns County once again walking away with the highest average in its RESA of 98.72, with the state average being 93. The increase over the previous school year was 8.44 points.

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Firewise Super Meeting on Oct. 2

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Towns County's Fire Adapted Communities will be holding a Super Meeting on Thursday, Oct. 2, at 6 p.m. at the Towns County Recreation Center to bring greater awareness of Firewise and associated fire safety programs to county residents.

The goal of the meeting will be to get as many neighborhoods as possible to pledge to become Firewise Communities in order to make homes safer from wildfire, which is a real threat and has happened here before.

So far, Towns County has 12 Firewise Communities, and hopes to have more than 20 after the Super Meeting.

"Firewise and Fire Adapted Communities are for people who live like we do," said Frank Riley, who is the executive director of the non-profit Chestatee-Chattahoochee Resource Conservation and



Frank Riley

Development Council, and has been a Towns County Firefighter for the past 16 years.

"Everybody here lives in something called a wildland urban interface, which is where the urban meets the forest," said Riley. "Nobody in this county lives outside of a mile of some forest somewhere."

Towns County is one of eight Fire Adapted Communities in the whole country, and serves as the pilot program for other FACs nationwide

to model, including upstart programs in Colorado, New Mexico, California, Washington, Oregon, Minnesota, New Jersey, Texas and Florida.

"A Fire Adapted Community is one that can stand on its own in the threat of a major wildfire," said Riley. "This whole concept we're growing here works. Fannin County has had 54 fires, I think, this year, and Union's had 33 - we've had seven."

Riley helped develop the concept of a Fire Adapted Community at a national conference in Boise, Idaho, last year, and received a grant through his RC&D to start the model program here in Towns County.

Fire Adapted Communities serves as an umbrella of sorts for Firewise and Ready, Set, Go!, among other initiatives.

Firewise is a national program sponsored by the National Fire Protection As-

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Dr. Berndt restructures her practice

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Dr. Holly Berndt has been an important member of the medical community in Towns County since she came here in 2007 with her husband Karl Berndt.

"Until October of last year, I was admitting patients at Chatuge Regional Hospital and seeing patients on the inpatient service there," said Dr. Berndt, who is a medical doctor of internal medicine. "And I loved it, and I think that their nursing quality is extremely high, and the services that they provide are topnotch."

Dr. Berndt came here initially because Towns County qualified as a health professional shortage area for the National Health Service Corps Scholarship, which helps doctors in training with educational



Dr. Holly Berndt and daughter Maddie visited the Towns County Herald recently. Dr. Berndt's practice, Chatuge Family Care, is bringing Dr. Keith Sipsy to Hiawassee. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

expenses in exchange for working at least two years in such an area upon graduation.

"And I'm really glad that this place qualified because it's beautiful," said Dr. Berndt, who

has remained a member of the community after fulfilling the scholarship requirements.

"It's a beautiful area, and

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BOE take a closer look at superintendent candidates

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

The Towns County Board of Education met for a called board meeting Monday, Sept. 15, to discuss the latest developments in the search for a new superintendent.

"First thing I want to do tonight is give you an update on what we've done and where we are," said Sandy Addis of King-Cooper and Associates, who is assisting the board in its search for the next superintendent of schools.

"Then I want us to go through a process to develop what we call a superintendent profile, which is to talk about what are the things you're looking for, and how important are different things," said Addis.

King-Cooper and Associates have advertised the superintendent vacancy on its own website, the Towns County Schools website, the Georgia School Superintendents Association website and the Georgia School Boards Association website.

Addis and his associates have also sent paper mailings to all of the school board offices and RESAs in the state. The mailings included nomination forms meant to extend the reach of the search by allowing boards to contact qualified individuals they know who may want to submit applications.

"As of Friday the 12th, we had 15 in hand, and we had another six or so people who have said, 'I'm sending mine in,'" said Addis. "Because we've got until Oct. 6, my prediction is you'll have 30 or maybe as many as 35 plus applications, without a doubt."

"Because we knew that there would be interest in the immediate area because of the geographic location, I sent a personal e-mail to all the people



Emily Phillips

who applied for the Rabun job," said Addis.

Furthermore, King-Cooper and Associates have helped the Towns County Board of Education to create a community survey of desirable superintendent attributes, which is posted on the Towns County Schools website.

The survey grades traits such as honesty and teaching experience on a scale of "Not a Consideration" to "Very Important."

Employees of the school system will take a separate survey, the results of which will be used in conjunction with the community survey and superintendent profile to develop a way to scale applicants for the position.

The board spent the majority of the open session part of the meeting listing attributes that they considered important in a superintendent candidate, and Addis put their desires into two categories: qualifications and characteristics.

"If you look at how the

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TOWNS COUNTY HERALD

