

Fish Advisory...continued from page 1

State health officials have not been able to positively identify the source of origin of the mercury contamination, but have determined that airborne deposits such as wind blown dust are the most likely source.

Lake Chatuge is one of the most popular waters for bass tournaments.

Those tournaments are not endangered, primar-

ily because the bass that are caught are released back into the lake.

For more details about the Chatuge fish consumption advisory, go to the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services' Fish Consumption Advisories Web site at www.epi.state.nc.us/epi/fish or call the North Carolina Division of Public Health at (919) 707-5900.

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officials. Penland had the esteemed honor of giving his Creed speech as a prelude to Sen. Wilkinson taking the floor.

The Senator, a Toccoa Republican, who represents Towns County in Senate District 50, is a huge advocate of the Agriculture/FFA program having served 22 years as the executive secretary of the Georgia Future Farmers of America at the Georgia Department of Education and almost four years as program manager in Agricultural Education at the state Department of Education.

Sen. Wilkinson told the crowd that he was honored to be able to be a part of this particular meeting and to hear Penland give his speech.

"Some of you may know that I am connected to FFA," Sen. Wilkinson said. "It's a great program and students learn responsibility, accountability, and a work ethic."

Penland is in FFA, FBLA, and is a member of the TCHS Indians' Marching Raider Band.

He has competed in numerous events in FFA. He has been competing in Creed

Speaking since seventh grade. In November 2012, Penland placed first in the FFA Sub-Region Creed Speaking CDE.

Co-founder of the Mountain Movers and Shakers, Sam Fullerton said, "We are endorsing and partnering with Sabrina Garrett's agricultural department at the high school and we will do what ever we need to do to get this young man to his competition."

"Anything Sabrina needs for her program, we are going to supply her with it," said Fullerton.

"As Senator Wilkinson and I have talked about, a high school education is really important and that's where we need to focus our attention," said Fullerton.

"I want to thank you so much for sponsoring such a great group of kids," Garrett said. "Not every kid is going to college. We need workers that have a good work ethic. We will always need laborers. I appreciate your support of the school system."

Good luck Adam Penland as you make your school and all of Towns County proud.

New year, new beginning for Georgia Mountain Writer's Club

The best thing that happened at this month's meeting was the return of our founder, Eleanor Dobson, "Ellie" as she is affectionately known to the club. After several months of serious illness she described herself as being 95% back to normal.

Our club went along for 10 years learning how to write, having fun, and critiquing each other's work. There were no dues and no rules (other than no politics and no religion). Now most of that has changed because of something we did. The Georgia Mountain Writers Club decided to publish an anthology of 30 of our member's works: "Reflections From the Mountains."

Now there is money involved. What do you do with it and how do you report it? Not only was it a huge experience (publishing our own book), but now we have to run the club like a business. The book

is mostly about local people and happenings, has proven to be popular, and is selling well. The club has decided to use the profit as prize money in projects that promote writing skills in our own community. We still have our reading and critiquing time that is so popular, but we're adding committees to tackle projects that can be done at times other than regular meetings. For example, people interested in fiction will be able to work together on their own projects to perfect them. This has been a new experience for us as a club, and we are learning to rise to the challenge.

The Georgia Mountain Writer's Club meets the second Wednesday of every month, at the Catholic Church on Hwy 76 in Blairsville, GA, from 10 AM until noon. Visitors are welcome. The experience is entertaining as well as a learning adventure. NT(Jan16,20)CA

GWRRA meetings Clogging class

Chapter J of the Gold Wing Road Riders Association (GWRRA) meets on the third Saturday of each month (excluding December) at Daniels Steakhouse, Hiwassee, GA. Fellowship and food at 11 AM with the meeting commencing at noon. We welcome riders of all brands of motorcycles and welcome participants of other GWRRA chapters. For further information, please contact Chapter Director Peg Jones 678-464-7340. NT(Jan16,21)CA

Beginner's clogging class on Mondays, from 4:45-5:30 p.m. in the Keith House at the John C. Campbell Folk School. All ages are welcome. Traditional Appalachian style clogging, hard soled shoes are preferred for beginners.

For more information, contact Dianne Jackson 828-837-8090.

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prioritize," Sen. Wilkinson said. On the upside, Sen. Wilkinson said he's seeing Georgia's economy gain steam.

"I think we are going to have an even stronger economy in the next couple of years," he said. "We have the airport in Atlanta which stays busy year round and the port in Savannah is the fourth busiest port in the United States."

"Our transportation system is really taking off and we are definitely on the map these days," Sen. Wilkinson said.

The Senator kept the crowd loose during the meeting. There was little wiggle room that morning as the guests spilled over into most of the restaurant.

"If I gain any weight, by the next time I come back to speak, I won't be able to fit behind the podium," he joked.

His quick wit and humor charmed the audience, but it didn't take long to get back down to the business at hand.

Sen. Wilkinson told the crowd that there's going to be some needed changes made in the State Senate.

"For the past couple of years, Lt. Gov. Casey Cagle has not been actively serving in the senate. That's about to change," he said. "Lt. Gov. Cagle will have more influence in the State Senate over the next couple of years and I think that's a good thing and I think we will see some much needed changes taking place."

Another issue that will be addressed at the start Tuesday's General Assembly will be ethics.

"In last year's election, voters spoke resoundingly clear that there was a need to cap gifts. I think the senate will cap gifts from lobbyists to \$100," Sen. Wilkinson said.

Sen. Wilkinson told the crowd that there are 180 members of the House and 56 members of the Senate.

"We need to be able to work together," Sen. Wilkinson said. "We have to be accountable to the people of Georgia who count on us to get things done."

Sen. Wilkinson got a hearty round of applause when he told the crowd, "I have a basic philosophy: too many laws and too much regulation."

That led to the last item on his agenda, and one that has been a hot topic in the news in



State Sen. John Wilkerson meets with some of Towns County's movers and shakers. Photo/Libby Shook

the past several weeks, the issue of school safety.

"I am a strong proponent of the Second Amendment," he said. "That being said, I have three grandchildren in public school, and I think child safety is and needs to be a priority."

"We don't have a gun problem in this country," he said. "What we have is the challenge of people needing to turn back to God."

"Another reason we're in the mess we're in this country is that people just have stopped caring; they have lost faith in government; voter turnout is very low," Sen. Wilkinson said.

The Senator then opened the floor to questions and one issue was how citizens can keep abreast of current issues that are taking place in the State Senate and how can they

have some input.

Wilkinson gave the crowd the Web site address for the General Assembly where they can find out about proposed legislation and state issues.

To access that Web site visit www.legis.ga.gov and if you have specific questions, Sen. Wilkinson invites constituents to call his office at (404) 463-5257.

Sen. Wilkinson told the crowd that if they call his office and have an issue they need addressed, they can leave a message with his legislative assistant, Donna Yeoman.

He assured the group that if it is something she can't handle that she will pass the information along to him.

"I hope you feel comfortable calling me if you have issues. I will call you back," Sen. Wilkinson said.

Christmas...continued from page 1

someone out unintentionally. I just want everyone to know how much we appreciate their support of the Sheriff's Empty Stocking Fund and for them to know that they made Christmas a little brighter for 197 families this year. That says a lot about this community," the sheriff said.

Towns County's Chief Deputy Jeff Edge said, "Folks call in and give the first name and age of the children and any specific toy that may have asked for. We don't ask for last names and the parents are free to distribute the toys as they choose."

The gifts are anonymous and as far as the kids know, jolly ole Saint Nick left the gifts under the tree.

The Sheriff's Office starts planning months in advance for the arrival of Santa Claus.

Santa Claus has a solid group of elves that combine their efforts to make each year a success.

Two of the busiest elves that play a central role in the planning phase are Heather Whitaker, administrative assistant at the Towns County Detention Center, and Vicki Ellis, administrative assistant at the Towns County Sheriff's Office.

Both are responsible for the shopping as well as playing a key role in organizing the TCSO Empty Stocking Christmas Parade.

"We work around the clock collecting, bagging, and delivering toys during the holiday season," said Ellis. "We get requests as late as Christmas Eve and even Christmas Day. We always work on Christmas Day, to fulfill those last minute requests."

Towns County Family Connection coordinator and volunteer with the TCSO Empty Stocking Fund Amy Rosser Gibby, is another one of

Santa's elves that is instrumental in making sure that kids in need are identified and that they get on Santa's good list.

"This project is very important to me. In our job, the deputies and I see a lot of kids that are in dire need, who are not likely to get anything for Christmas," Sheriff Clinton said.

"As a child, I remember the joy of Christmas and the thought of a child waking up on Christmas morning, like it's just another day, is unbearable to me. We give gifts because the Lord gave us the most precious gift of all," he said.

Lions...continued from page 1

at the Paris Pavilion at the Fairgrounds.

Everyone enjoyed great fellowship and excellent food.

Several Leo Club members were present as well.

In July, three new members were inducted into the Lions Club as well as installation of officers for the new calendar year: Michael Annast, director; Gene Jackson, director; Allan Saylor, membership chairman, Ralph Grady, Lion Tamer; Doug Canup, Tail Twister; Bob Ford, Second Vice President; Janice Smith, First Vice President; Janice King, Treasurer; Carnie Wall, Secretary; and Julie Payne, President.

Payne also was honored with the Melvin Jones Fellowship Award.

This special plaque is in recognition of people who have given above and beyond the call of duty.

July was just the beginning of a very busy season as the Georgia Mountain Fair opened.

Lions Club members were there volunteering their time as they worked food booths, ticket booths, and wore many hats as they served in various capacities in an effort to make sure that guests were happy and all their needs were met.

Speaking of above and beyond the call of duty, Payne was there everyday of the 10-day event, working up to 16 hours daily.

In the spirit of serving, the Clay County Lions Club assisted with parking each day.

The month of August was very memorable for the members of the Lions Club as the newly formed Leo Club was chartered with 19 members in attendance.

Parents and friends were

there to witness the installation of these young men and women as they stepped up to take their place in the Lions Club and community as newly installed officers.

Georgia Leo Club Advisor, Steve Helwig performed the installation ceremony.

October was another very busy month.

When it felt like the Georgia Mountain Fair had just ended, the Fall Festival was gearing up for another 10 days of arts, crafts, good food, and many talented performers taking the stage at the Anderson Music Hall.

Once again the Lions Club stepped up to the plate to make sure this was a successful event and that all guests had a good time.

The Lions Club also played an active role in the success of Halloween on the Square at the end of October.

Again, the Lions demonstrate their commitment to the kids of Towns County.

The November Lions Club meeting was a huge success as they held their annual Give a Christmas auction.

Lion Jack Anderson served as auctioneer and their was just no saying 'no' to him.

He was very entertaining, charming, and witty as he helped the club bring in \$4,500 for the Give a Christmas program.

Everyone walked away with their wallets a little emptier and their hearts a little fuller.

Finally, December rolled around and the Lions Annual Give a Christmas program was held at Anderson Music Hall as kids had the opportunity to visit with Santa, enjoy cookies and other sweet treats, and all kids walked

away with a toy in hand.

Beautifully decorated trees were donated to families that might not have one otherwise, and all the children had the opportunity to win a raffle (at no cost to the family) bicycle or scooter.

All in all, Give a Christmas was another huge success as evidenced by the big smiles on the faces of the children.

Leo Club members and FBLA members were there to play helper elves and assist where needed.

During a very eventful 2012, the Lions Club donated to the following charities: Camp Kudzu, Georgia Lions Camp for the Blind, Georgia Lions Lighthouse, White Cane, and Learning Ally.

Local charities they were involved in during 2012 include: Clay Dotson Open Golf Tournament, Young Harris College Local Scholarship Fund, Towns County High School FBLA, Boy Scout Troop 125, Towns County 4-H, Artworks-summer art programs for children, Towns County Chamber Golf Tournament benefiting the Towns County Fire Department, and the Towns County Food Pantry.

If you are interested in being a part of this charitable organization and making a difference in your community, you owe it to yourself to check out the Towns County Lions Club.

For more details, call the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds Office at (706) 896-4191.

Lions membership is by sponsorship.

The Towns County Lions Club meets every second and fourth Tuesday of each month at 6 p.m. at Anderson Music Hall. Visitors are always welcome.

Making things happen for rural America

By Frank Riley
Executive Director
RC&D

Executive Director of
RC&D



The Chestatee/Chattahoochee RC&D has two ongoing projects that fulfill our mission of "assisting local people in planning and carrying out activities that conserve natural resources, support economic development, enhance the environment, and improve the standard of living for all citizens."

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources Environmental Protection Division, commonly referred to as the EPD, is given the responsibility to protect and restore Georgia's environment for all of us to enjoy.

The EPD takes the lead in ensuring clean air, water and land and along with partners such as the RC&D.

Together, they pursue a sustainable environment that provides a foundation for a vibrant economy and healthy communities.

They accomplish these goals by enforcing environmental rules and regulations and by providing grants to fund preventative and restoration projects along our streams and waterways.

Mud Creek watershed in Habersham, Hall, and Banks Counties and the other in the Cold Water Creek watershed in Hart and Elbert counties.

The main goal of these grants is to help landowners improve water quality or repair environmental issues on their property that can impact neighbors downstream and harm the environment.

Elements of the funded projects may include; installation of fencing to keep livestock out of streams that can cause stream bank erosion, stream sedimentation, fecal coli form, E Coli, and reduced oxygen levels in the water; Solar panels to provide "green" power for lights and to pump water for livestock; Rain barrel systems to catch rainwater for watering livestock; Heavy use livestock feeding facilities; Pasture and hay land planting; Stream crossings that minimize stream bank erosion and sedimentation; and other projects that improve or preserve our natural resources.

Another 319 project demonstrates the positive effects of tree revegetations on eroding stream banks.

A tree revegetation is a method that uses whole trees cabled tightly together in giant bundles.

These bundles are then secured to the eroded stream bank in a shingling effect, just like the shingles on a roof, through a system of anchoring cables.

Tree revegetations have been shown to greatly slow the stream current along an eroding bank, decrease erosion and allow sediment to be deposited in the tree branches of the revegetment.

The deposited sediment forms an excellent seedbed in which the seeds of riparian trees such as sycamores and maple, as well as other plants, can sprout and grow.

The resulting growth spreads roots throughout the revegetment and into the existing stream bank.

In addition to slowing stream bank erosion, tree revegetments also provide excellent habitat for birds, fish, and other forms of wildlife.

The RC&D also has one more 319(h) grant in the works for the Town Creek Watershed of White County. Applications for participating landowners for this grant will be open soon.

Frank M. Riley, Jr, CF is Executive Director of the Chestatee/Chattahoochee RC&D Council.