

Towns County Herald

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Local Weather and Lake Levels

Thu: Clouds	76 46
Fri: Clouds	77 45
Sat: Clouds	77 47
Sun: Sunny	75 46
Mon: Sunny	73 48
Tue: Clouds	72 47
Wed: Clouds	73 48



Upstream Elevation Predicted 10/09/13	
Lake Chatuge	1,920.58
Lake Nottely	1,767.01
Blue Ridge	1,676.65

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Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds Hiawassee



Christmas Tour of Homes

See Page 2A

Free Food Distribution



Tuesday October 15th
Towns County Food Pantry



American Red Cross

YARD SALE

OCT. 12TH

See Page 3A



CROSS COUNTRY

Wed Oct 9th 4 PM
@ Hayesville

Thurs Oct 10th 4 PM
@ Union County

Head Start safe from the Fed for now

By Charles Duncan
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The Pre-K program in Towns County was shutdown indefinitely on Monday due to the budget showdown in Washington, D.C.

Miraculously on Tuesday, the program was open again even as Americans were being held hostage by Congress and the White House.

While no one would comment on the Head Start or Pre-K programs about why the program - defunct of federal funds - was reopening, the Towns County Herald has learned that the program is being funded in six states by philanthropists Laura and John Arnold through October.

The program is in jeopardy again in November if the federal government shutdown has not been resolved. Essentially, 22 Pre-K students and 1 Towns County Pre-K teacher and approximately four office employees were furloughed on Monday because of the federal government shut-



Melissa Williams

down that entered its second week.

That all changed on Tuesday.

"For nearly 50 years, Head Start has been the window of opportunity for more than 27 million of our nation's poorest children as they embark on their journey to achieve the American Dream," said Yasmina Vinci, Executive Director of the National Head Start Association. "The Arnolds' most generous act epitomizes what it means to be an angel investor; they have selflessly stepped up for Head Start chil-

dren to ensure their path toward kindergarten readiness is not interrupted by the inability of government to get the nation's fiscal house in order."

Funding for early learners in Towns County is implemented by Ninth District Opportunity, Inc.

Towns County provides the facilities and services for payroll and Special Education.

All other functions are covered by Ninth District Opportunity, Inc.

Towns County's early learners program was only impacted for one day thanks to the Arnolds. After learning about the devastating impact the government shutdown would have on Head Start children, the Arnolds came forward and offered assistance that will allow the programs that have been recently closed to re-open and those facing imminent closure to remain in operation.

If after the government shutdown, the government

See *Shutdown*, Page 14A

Fall Festival begins on Friday at Fairgrounds

By Charles Duncan
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The Georgia Mountain Fall Festival returns to the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds Oct. 11th through Oct. 19th for nine days of arts and crafts, mountain history and folklore, good food, and live entertainment amidst a beautiful backdrop of fall colors.

The festival also features the dynamic Georgia Mountain Fiddlers Convention.

According to Fairgrounds' General Manager Hilda Thomason patrons are in for a treat.

"We have some new things for the Fall Festival," Thomason said. "We will be having helicopter rides on Oct. 12th, and Oct. 18th. We also have the Paul Bunyan Lumberjack Show as a special attraction. And Little Petes Railroad."

And of course there's the juried Arts and Crafts Show. And don't forget, scooters are



Hilda Thomason

available for rent during the Georgia Mountain Fall Festival throughout the event. Rental rates are \$10 an hour and \$50 daily rentals also are available.

Throughout each day of the festival, visitors will be entertained by a wide range of musical performances that include the dynamic Brenda Lee, who opens the festival on Friday, Oct. 11th.

Other legendary performers include Ricky Skaggs, Percy See *Fall Festival*, Page 14A

Ansley Vardeman adds another crown



The Queen and her Court. Ansley Vardeman is crowned 2013 Football Homecoming Queen. Jasmine Forrester was crowned Homecoming Princess. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

By Heather Poole
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Towns County High School has a new Homecoming King and Queen.

On Thursday at the Blue

See *Ansley*, Page 14A

And the winner is . . .

By Heather Poole
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Steven Van Sheridan of Athens, and Ashley Strickland, also of Athens, will do the honors of opening for Merle Haggard on Oct. 25th at Anderson Music Hall.

Both were among the 20 contestants - male and female - vying to be the opening act for the legendary Country Music icon.

Saturday night, a paying crowd turned out to watch the finals of the talent show. The winners, one male and one female, would have the opportunity to open for Haggard.

Some audience members even had signs to support their favorite singers.

The contestants were judged on talent, stage presence, and audience response.

Cody Short sang a Haggard song, and though he appeared to be quite young, he had the voice of a much older man.

He looked professional, bringing out his own stool to more easily strum his guitar as he sang.

While 9 of the 20 finalists played their own instruments, Short managed to be one of the more memorable performances.

Wyatt Espalin played the fiddle, and his friend, Josh Hedden, played guitar. The pair



Wyatt Espalin reaches into the hat for a chance to open for Merle Haggard on Oct. 25th. He's going to the show, but only to watch. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

did *Wagon Wheel*, and blew everyone away. The audience sang along to the familiar tune and feet were tapping as Espalin did an outstanding job on the fiddle.

Van Sheridan, of Athens, had his own fan club in the audience. He sang Travis Tritt's *Drive in Your Country*. He played the guitar along to the tune, and did so while wearing studded black jeans and a leather vest.

Felicia Owens sang *Better Dig Two*. She came all the

way from South Carolina to compete, and even had supporters present to cheer her on. Her impressive, raspy voice sounded a little like Janis Joplin.

Shannon York sang the Pistol Anniies song, *Hell on Heels*, and joked that it might describe one of Haggard's five ex-wives.

She played the guitar in a slower, acoustic version of the song, but still showed off her very impressive pipes.

See *Finals*, Page 14A

Two held for alleged motor vehicle theft

By Charles Duncan
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Towns County sheriff's deputies arrested two Hiawassee residents wanted in connection with the theft of a motor vehicle in Habersham County, Towns County Sheriff's Office records show.

Towns deputies were notified by Habersham County authorities on Friday, Oct. 4th, of a stolen vehicle which might be in Towns County.

A 1995 Toyota Camry was allegedly taken on Oct. 1st from a residence in

Cornelia, sheriff's reports show.

Towns County deputies began a search to recover the vehicle.

Habersham County authorities had secured arrest warrants on two individuals for the theft of the vehicle.

Bradley Jeremy Sutton, 33, and Tiffany Nicole McNabb, 28, both of Hiawassee, were wanted in connection with the incident by the Cornelia Police Department, sheriff's reports show.

On Sunday, October 6th, Towns County sheriff's deputies located the vehicle at a residence on Highway

288 in Towns County.

Sutton and McNabb were taken into custody to hold for Cornelia Police Department.

Towns County sheriff's deputies secured the Toyota Camry and it was taken to the Sheriff's Office impound lot at the Towns County Detention Center for the owner to take possession, sheriff's reports show.

At press time, Sutton and McNabb were still in custody at the Towns County Detention Center awaiting transport to Habersham County to the Cornelia Police Department.

No further details were available at press time.

Local governments to hold millage hearings

By Charles Duncan
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Two local government bodies will raise their millage rate, and two will stay the course.

However, a millage rate increase for the county government doesn't signal a tax increase for residents.

You have to examine the big picture.

Towns County's Tax Digest plummeted \$57 million from 2012 to \$771.8 million in 2013.

In an economy that continues to spiral, Towns County has witnessed a drop in its Tax Digest from \$1.03 billion in 2008, to \$771.8 million in 2013.

Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall proposes a millage rate increase from 5.270 mills to 5.622 mills for county maintenance and operations.

Despite the increase in millage rate, it's still a \$50,000, or 1.24 percent tax decrease because of the decline in the Tax Digest.

The fire district millage rate for the county increase .03 mills to .5 mills.

The Towns County Board of Education is proposing a millage rate increase from 8.118 mills to 8.349 mills, a tax



Commissioner Bill Kendall

increase of .029 percent.

Meanwhile, the City of Young Harris will stay the course, as it has for several years in a row at 2.493 mills.

The Young Harris City Council will set its final millage rate at a Nov. 5th meeting at 7 p.m. at City Hall.

Likewise, the City of Hiawassee opted to remain at 2.270 mills. The Hiawassee City Council will hold its millage rate hearing Oct. 22nd, at 2 p.m. at City Hall.

Towns County Board of Education will hold its millage hearing at 7:30 a.m. on Oct. 24th, at BOE headquarters.

Commissioner Kendall will hold the county's millage hearing at the Towns County Courthouse at 5:30 p.m. to set the county's millage rate and the county's fire district millage rate.

State Rep. Allison speaks to Shakers

By Heather Poole
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Georgia House District 8 State Rep. Stephen Allison (R-Blairsville) spoke to the Mountain Movers and Shakers at Mary's Southern Grill last Friday morning, and had everyone smiling.

A wonderful speaker, Rep. Allison received a warm welcome by Towns County Coroner, Tashina Eller.

Eller spoke highly of Rep. Allison, recalling how encouraging and helpful he was to her when running for County Coroner.

She used the words character and integrity to describe him saying, "he has consistently been the same; he never changes."

Rep. Allison started his speech by explaining that many of the current events impacting Americans may be above his pay grade, but after his wife encouraged him to talk about what he knew, he decided he would try to explain all that he could.

One of the things Rep. Allison felt he knew was about people's misconceptions of government, namely how it was founded.

He spoke about how people seem to think all of the conflict is something new.

For those people, Rep. Allison suggested looking back in the Bible.

There was conflict in Cain and Abel, and as far as political conflict in the past, he had that covered, too.



Stephen Allison

The Election of 1800 between Thomas Jefferson and John Adams was so brutal it almost tore the nation apart. Rep. Allison summed it up by saying, "Ever since man has existed, there has been conflict."

Continuing the theme of history, Rep. Allison explained that he has been interested in government since he was 10.

He admired President Ronald Reagan, and he was able to meet him when he was a child.

He also explained that few people realize Reagan only won 50.8 percent of the popular vote. Four years later, he won 60 percent.

"I think there is a fundamental disconnect in what government does," Rep. Allison said.

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