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According to Wilkinson, Gov. Deal told him that he did not feel that HR 1162 would have the same impact in this Senatorial District.

Gov. Deal told him that he felt that people should have a choice and that he had been in some school districts that he wouldn't want to send his kids to.

Wilkinson was in agreement with that statement.

"In all fairness to Gov. Deal, he is a good person and he's the governor of the whole state. If you had to deal with some of these school boards around the state with some of them looking at losing accreditation and parents with kids that can't get into college due to that fact, you might see things his way," said Wilkinson.

"At the end of the day, I voted for it, but the governor promised me that there would be some enabling legislation regarding the bill," said Sen. Wilkinson.

When asked what kind of enabling legislation he was referring to, Wilkinson told the group to read about HR 1162 on the Internet and it would be explained in detail.

The "enabling legislation" he was referring to is HB 797, also authored by Jones, which basically is just an "Act" or amendment regarding state chartered schools which reads the same as HR 1162.

"I didn't come to argue for Charter Schools or try to convince anyone to vote for this amendment," said Wilkinson.

"People have fought, died, and shed their blood so people could have the right to vote. Maybe we can get out and get people registered to vote and get them out to the polls. The people of the state of Georgia will make the final decision for or against on Nov. 6th," said Wilkinson.

Wilkinson told the group that there are currently 200 charter schools in the state and that 180 of those schools were approved at the local level. There are only 16 charter schools that the state granted according to Wilkinson.

"It's a real honor for me to represent you in Atlanta. I also want to thank all of you for not running against me so I can run unopposed in November," said a jovial Wilkinson.

Wilkinson, a Republican member of the Georgia State Senate, represents District 50.

He was elected in December 2011 to fill the vacancy created when State Sen. Jim

Butterworth resigned to accept an appointment as Adjutant General of the Georgia National Guard.

Sen. Wilkinson is very familiar and knowledgeable in the field of education having served 22 years as the Executive Secretary of the Georgia FFA Association at the Georgia Department of Education and almost 4 years as Program Manager in Agriculture Education at the Georgia Department of Education.

"I am a public school person. I was in the public schools. I draw a retirement check from the TRS (Teacher Retirement System) just like you," said Wilkinson.

He also has close family ties to education.

"I worked in public education for 32 years and my wife is currently a kindergarten teacher in the Franklin County School System with two more years to go before she has her 30 years in. My dad served as County School Superintendent in Stephens County and as a Principal in Habersham County during a career that spanned more than 30 years. I am proud of the fact that everyone in my family is a product of public schools," said Wilkinson.

Wilkinson told the group of almost 30 retired educators that he has a personal interest in education and acknowledged that the past few years have been trying and challenging times for the nation economically.

This is true especially in education as teachers have faced increased classroom sizes, calendar reduction days, and extreme budget cuts overall.

"State revenue is about \$3 billion less than it was at one time," Sen. Wilkinson said. "With this kind of shortfall, you have two choices, raise taxes or cut spending and I haven't met a taxpayer yet in favor of raising taxes."

Sen. Wilkinson discussed the many benefits of the Tax Reform Act including removing taxes from energy and eliminating ad valorem taxes on automobiles. He said that this has made a tremendous difference for taxpayers.

"I do believe that things are going to get better in education," said Wilkinson.

It is up to the citizens of Georgia as to whether or not the Charter Amendment passes. Wilkinson encourages all Georgia residents to exercise their right to make their wishes known by voting on Nov. 6th.

Festival...continued from page 1A

One of their all time great hits, *If I Said You Had a Beautiful Body (Would You Hold it Against Me)*, sent the fans into a frenzy.

They were on their feet, clapping, and absolutely showing these very talented brothers their love and appreciation of their enduring musical talent.

Gwen and Harry Sheffield of Macon have been coming to the Fall Festival for the past 6 years.

"The first time we came here, the Bellamy Brothers were here. We really enjoy them," said Harry Sheffield.

Sunday was a day of praise and worship along with some re-

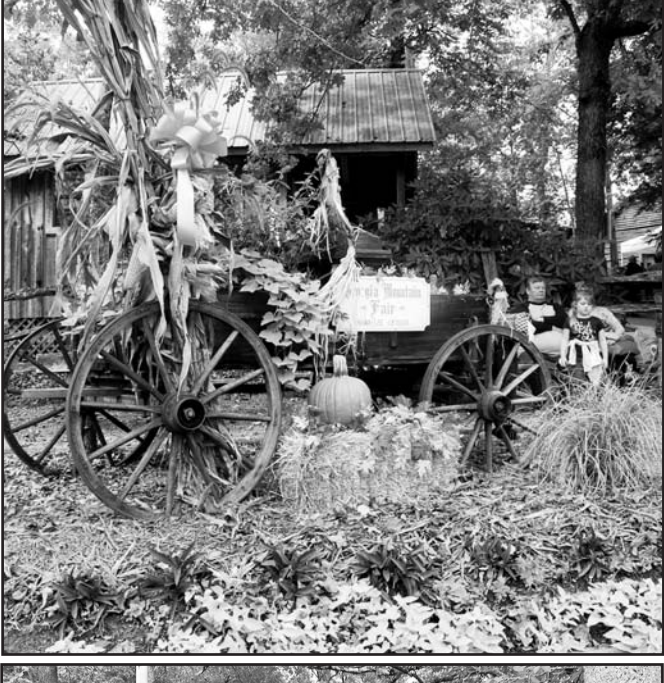
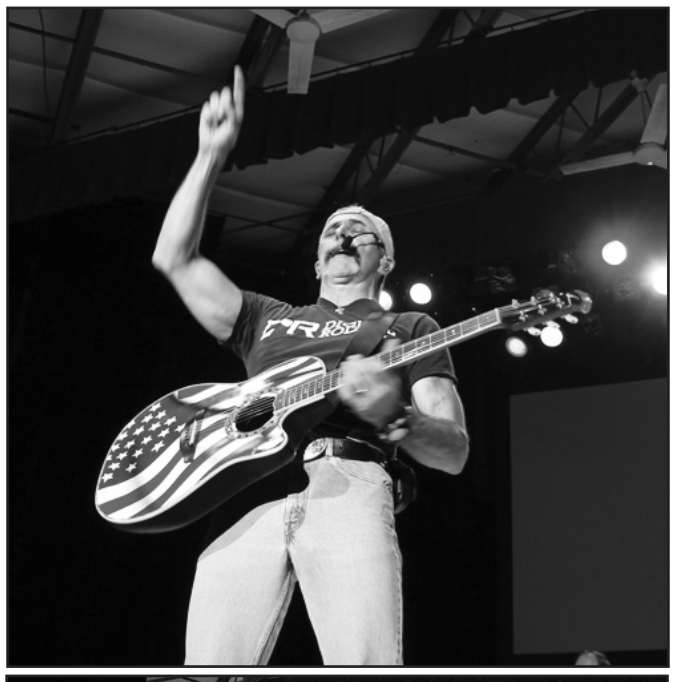
ally great Gospel music.

This was just the first few opening days. There's plenty more in store. The Festival runs through the Oct. 21st and everyday is full of delicious food, great entertainment, helicopter rides, the Pioneer and Craft Villages, the Fearless Flores Thrill Show, and the Georgia

Fiddler's Convention on Oct. 19th and 20th.

If you haven't had the opportunity to stop in and enjoy all that the 2012 GMF Fall Festival has to offer, you owe it to yourself to make the trip.

You will not be disappointed. The Fall Festival is well worth the visit.



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project is part of Hiwassee's 10-Year Plan and will cost in excess of one million dollars," said Stancil.

According to Stancil, the City will receive \$600,000 in state and federal grants and will use about \$230,000 in approved Special Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) proceeds for this project.

"The Council has also dedicated \$230,000 in GEFA loans for the replacement of the water plant intake. The majority of the project is paid for and the remainder will be paid off

as long term low interest debt," said Stancil.

"The Mayor and City Council should be commended for this critical investment in our future and improving water quality and protecting our children. These improvements will be of tremendous benefit to all of Towns County for the next twenty years," said Stancil.

Please contact Stancil, at (706) 897-0495, if you have any questions or would like to tour the Hiwassee Water Plant.

Quake...continued from page 1A

an earthquake which registered 2.5 on the Richter Scale with a depth of 8.7 kilometers (5.4 miles).

It was reported to be felt as far away as Chattanooga, Tenn. and in some parts of the Atlanta area as well.

Towns County EMS/EMA Director Ricky Mathis would like to see more people get on board and participate while making sure they are prepared in the event of any kind of emergency.

While earthquakes are uncommon for this area, they can still occur as was evidenced in Fannin County.

"Already more than 15,000 Georgia residents, including several schools have registered for the Shakeout, where they will practice 'Drop, Cover, and Hold on' which means drop to the ground, take cover under a sturdy desk or table, and hold on until the shaking stops," said Mathis.

More than 1.5 million residents across six states will 'Drop, Cover, and Hold on' while participating in The Great Southeast Shakeout. This is

the first earthquake drill ever organized in this region.

The Georgia Emergency Management Agency/Homeland is sponsoring the 'Shakeout'. Ready Georgia campaign is supporting this effort in Georgia, joining schools, businesses, and schools across Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, and Washington, D.C.

The event is being organized in the Central United States Earthquake Consortium, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Geological Survey, and other partners.

"The Great Shakeout is the perfect time to practice your disaster response plan," says Lisa Janak-Newman, spokesperson for GEMA's Ready Georgia campaign.

"Earthquakes are just one of many natural disasters that can occur in Georgia. Knowing the proper procedures for different emergencies will enable you to take immediate action, and that could be the difference between life and death," said Janak-Newman.

Lions hear from appreciative family

By Libby Shook
Towns County Herald
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The Towns County Lions Club recently welcomed Skip and Georgia Peters of Young Harris as their special guest speakers at their end of the month meeting in September.

Georgia Peters opened with a very heartwarming and touching story of how the Lions Club had made a tremendous difference in the life of their son who was in a severe auto accident and in a coma for 40 days.

As she expressed her gratitude to them for the services they provide to the community, she detailed the emotional story.

"During recovery from the accident, his vision was affected and he needed special eyeglasses, but could not afford them," she said. "He sent a request to the Lions Club and they purchased them for him."

"We have always had a special affection for the various community services offered by the Lions Club," said Georgia Peters.

Tragedy is not unfamiliar to the Peters as they have experienced it on a very personal level, but they have such a unique insight into the tragedies and their great faith in God sustains them as they continue on the path they have been given and build on it, literally.

Skip Peters is a retired log home builder, but he did not retire by choice.



Georgia and Skip Peters express their appreciation to Towns County Lions Club members for helping their son. Photo/Libby Shook

Several years ago, in a surgery that went awry, Peters lost the use of his left hand.

He was determined that he would continue to build and build he did. He just decided to downsize somewhat and the log homes that he used to build for people, all of a sudden became homes for our feathered friends.

Peters now builds replicas of former log homes as birdhouse mailboxes.

While this is an amazing story of overcoming obstacles, it gets even more interesting.

Peters builds his birdhouses from all recycled mate-

rial from Towns County. "I just saw a lot of scrap in dumpsters around the county and thought that would be a good way to recycle and put it to good use," said Peters.

He drove around the county looking for building projects and explained to the owners that he would like to put their trash to good use and turn them into something creative.

They were happy to have him haul away their "trash" so he could turn them into his "treasures."

Skip Peters truly is an inspiration. It would have

been very easy for him to just give up.

"I have to work with my hands. It's just how I am. I love to build," he said.

The Peters' shared photos of his handiwork with the interested audience. They also extended a personal invitation for the Lions Club members to visit their personal residence to view the craftsmanship that he has put into his mailboxes.

He volunteered to make a project for the Lions Club and asked them to be thinking about ideas for a useful project that had a special meaning to the Club.